

*The Soul  
of the  
Street*



*Norman  
Duncan*



RB340628



*Thomas Fisher  
Rare Book Library*

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



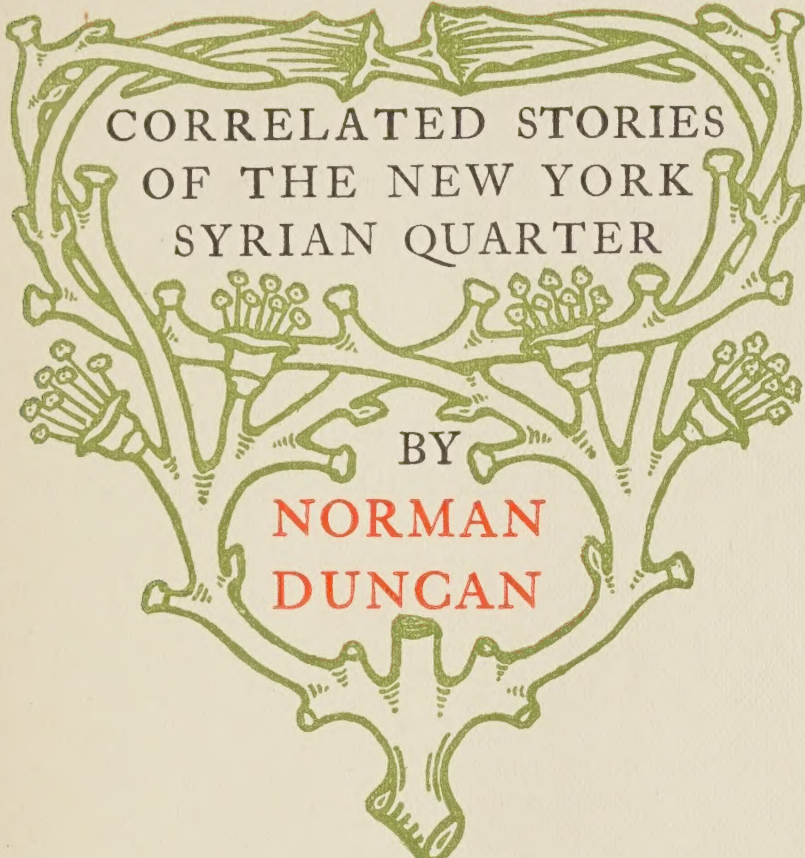


# THE SOUL OF THE STREET





# THE SOUL OF THE STREET



CORRELATED STORIES  
OF THE NEW YORK  
SYRIAN QUARTER

BY  
NORMAN  
DUNCAN


NEW YORK  
McCLURE, PHILLIPS  
& COMPANY

1900

Copyright, 1900, by  
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
University of Toronto







## CONTENTS

	Page
The Lamp of Liberty	I
In the Absence of Mrs. Halloran	27
The Greatest Player in All the World	51
For the Hand of Haleem	77
The Under-Shepherd	107
The Spirit of Revolution	137





# THE LAMP OF LIBERTY



MOTHER

*Here is the Flower of*

YOUR LOVE





## PREFACE

IN the name of God, the most merciful, the all-compassionate : *There are many mysteries. If the Revealed be as a grain of sand, the Hidden is as a great mountain ; yea, even, the sum of man's knowledge is a little star twinkling in the void, which is the unknowable. . . . The Innermost Heart of man is a mystery. The Eye is its Voice, else how speaketh it ? Verily, the tongue of man is a poor member, and perverse ; and fulfilleth its purpose not half so well as a single hair of the lash of his eye. . . . By the Deep, and by Him who poured it forth ; by the Dome, and by Him who raised it, these things are mysteries.*—From the first writings of Khalil Khayat.

N. D.

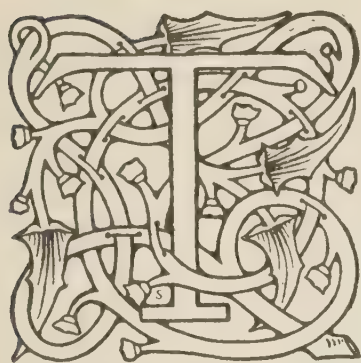
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

June, 1900.





## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY



HE panes were grimy even to dead translucence with the dirt of seven years. The sanctum was in keeping—littered, dusty, empty of energy. For just seven years Salim Shofi had published, daily, *Kawkab Elhorriah*—which, translated from the Arabic, is Star of Liberty—in the old yellow building near South Street. The outer air was balmy enough; so Khalil Khayat, the editor, seeking the comfort and inspiration of the spring sunshine in its fulness, raised the sash. He had never said: “I cannot see the sky for the dirt on the panes, Salim. Would the cost of cleaning be very great?” He had patiently raised the sash; for this is the way of the Syrian: day after day to step aside, rather than stoop once to lift the stone off the path. Khayat turned indecisively from the page on his desk to steal a little dream from out of the window; and was distressed until he lost thought of the thieving, for the day was drawing on, and there was still much to be

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

written concerning Oppression, for the awakening of the people of Washington Street. To preoccupy him there was a jagged stretch of blue sky; laden docks and thin spars tangled of many ships; a patch of river, scattering the sunlight; traffic turbulent in the street; the smoke of the making of things, hanging darkly over the opposite city; cry and creaking, rattle and roar. But the sum of all was confusion and hurry; so the scrawny old tree that pushed up from the barren atmosphere of the curb and shook its shaggy head under his window, easily distracted Khayat's thoughts to the lawn and ivy and gray stone of Oxford, and to the glorified days when his name was set in the lecture-table of the Department of Oriental Languages, in the manner following: "K. Khayat (for Professor Marmouth), Arabic for Beginners. Fee £2. Mondays 10-11, Thursdays 10-11, Saturdays 2-3." These Oxford days were such days as may be lived over again for solace. As it is written, Dream the evil days through! Khayat was a refugee; he once told me he had shed guilty Mohammedan blood for his sister's sake. That was a past forgotten—save on nights of high wind and low, scudding clouds.

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

There was another to dream about: a year's companionship with scholars. Ecstasy that had indubitably been! Inalienable experiences! Even as it is written, Dream the evil days through! Lost to the stuffy untidiness within and the yellowed city without, Khayat took an experience from his store, and related it to himself, as though to another, for his own delectation—smiling wistfully the while. “Once when I was een Oxford,” he told himself, using the English, as he often did, for practice, “I was eenvited to tea by a gentleman. Pro-fess-or Highmead eet was—of the Department of Math-e-mat-eeek. Very kin’ gentleman he was. Ah, they are so good—so-o good to foreigners—een England! They care not for money—no, nor for dress; but onlee for knowledge. An’ one gentleman he say, ‘Meester Khayat, what do you theenk of Lord Nelson?’ I answer to heem, sayin’, ‘He was the greatest Admiral of all the world. I would like to have been heem.’ An’ Mees Upworth, a ladee not young—no, not young, but so-o sweet—Mees Aleece Upworth she laugh; an’ the gentleman say: ‘But he had onlee one arm.’ ‘Ah, eet ees true,’ I reply, ‘he had onlee one arm; but I

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

would geeve both arms an' my two eyes to make such serveece for the state.' An' he say, jokin': 'What do you theenk of the Dook of Wellin'ton—he had onlee one eye?' 'I beg your pardon, Sair Arthur,' I answer to heem, 'you mus' be jokin'. The Dook of Wellin'ton had hees two eyes.' An' I laugh. 'No, no,' he say, 'he had but one eye onlee.' Then he weenk. 'So,' I say, 'you are right, Sair Arthur. The Dook of Wellin'ton have but one eye. He was a soldier—not a politician.' Mees Upworth—ho, she laugh; an' the blood eet come queek to Sair Arthur's face. Oh, eet was ver-ee good—so-o good! Ha, ha!" Khayat clapped his hands and laughed like a gleeful child hugged rapturously for a pretty accomplishment.

Then, soberly, he put the retrospect from him; and bent over his desk to continue the writing of a didactic "leetle ro-mance" called *The Sultan at the Bar of Civilization*, that he might serve his master faithfully, and his God, and the people. The story was more to him than the somnolent smell of spring and the dreams it mothered. He thought he had been called of God to foster the patriotism of



## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

the people. It was written for them—that they might arise, they, their children or their children's children. And they were reading it in the restaurants, from night to night, with hot blood in their throats: this he observed, to his inspiration, from his corner in the back room of Fiani's pastry shop, where he drank his coffee every evening. Thanks be to God, the Giver of Gifts of Mind! Men said to him: "Why do you care for the people of Washington Street—these men from the mountains—these pigs? Have they minds? Have they hearts! Will they profit? Will they give you any thanks? Are they not like feathers in the wind? Is not Money more to them than Patriotism?" These men were wise; but Khayat, answering, said: "A field of grain is from the seed of a sheaf." The story, then, was more to him than any other thing. What else he wrote he dubbed affectionately *This* or *That* in his naïve way. The story he dignified; it was to him a Match for the Lamp of Liberty.

"I have written of the shedding of the innocent blood," he thought. "The people know the crime. Now I must summon the Murderer. Abdul Hamid—the time is at hand!"

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Khayat laughed, and smoothed his grizzled mustache, and snuggled close to the desk. He was obviously content in the thing he was to do.

“Now the Sheikh of Civilization,” he wrote, “standing on the highest peak of the Alps, wrapped in a striped mantle of many jewel-decked folds, sounded a blast on his silver horn. Swift as the echo there came, flying, Enlightenment, with her sisters, Justice and Virtue; and the sisters said: ‘Peace be unto you, O Venerable One!’ ‘And the Sheikh answered: ‘Peace be unto you!’ Now the Sheikh fell silent; and at last he said: ‘Hie you, three sisters, to Constantinople, to the court of Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, to inform him that the people of Armenia have delivered to me a charge against him. Warn him to retain eminent counsel, that he may worthily be defended in my court; for seven days hence shall judgment be delivered in his case.’ Straight did Enlightenment, with her sisters, fly away; and they come to Constantinople, to the palace of the Sultan, to the court of Abdul Hamid, and found him whom they sought, sitting on a throne, in the company of many beautiful

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

young ladies. Now when Enlightenment, with her sisters, Justice and Virtue, stood before Abdul Hamid, he was ashamed. But Enlightenment said to him: 'Peace be unto you, O Excellent King!' And he answered: 'Peace be unto you, Beautiful Ones!' Then did Enlightenment repeat to him the message; and Abdul Hamid, rising from his throne, answered proudly: 'Who is this Civilization that he presumes to set himself up as judge over me? And who——'"

Salim Shofi came in—stealthily, as of nature. He sat down without a word—being careful as to the coat-tails of his gaudy ready-made coat—and fixed his greasy eyes on a knot-hole in the floor. This may be written of Shofi: The children of the Quarter made way for him; for they had learned that he was mercilessly quick with hand and foot. His was the right to enter stealthily, or any other way he pleased; for his was *Kawkab Elhorriah*, and his—old Khayat. He had bought the newspaper because he thought it would be profitable to be a political influence—to double-deal with the Consul and the people; and he had, by chance, entered into possession of the editor on a sultry night, when

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

supper and bed were not to be had for nothing in Washington Street. Khayat was hungry and lonely and a stranger then; and at all times he was afraid of the world, so it had been easy to agree for him at a weekly wage of seven dollars. Now Shofi crept in on kitten's feet; but Khayat, his servant, was neither dreaming at the window nor lost to the day's countless little duties in the seductive black book wherein are contained the writings of Abo Elola Elmoarri. It chanced that his eyes were crawling over the page with his pencil-point; and he was safely sitting on the big, black book. Shofi had to swallow the brusque words that were on his tongue's tip.

"May God give you happiness this day, Salim," Khayat said, turning. He bowed where he sat—asserting the royalty of knowledge; and his smile was such as men wear to win children. "Happiness," he added, "in abundant measure."

The interruption was distressful. The eyes of Khayat's imagination were open; his fingers were tingling for the pencil. The seizure of the Sultan by the messengers of Civilization, his abjection of dread, the ut-



## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

terances of Justice, the conviction and last wail to the All-Compassionate—all were then known to Khayat; and the day was passing. But when had the old scholar failed in courtesy? The Quarter cannot answer.

Shofi lowered at his shiny shoes. His servant's condescension was objectionable to him; for in his own estimation Shofi was a power, so constituted by various possessions—of which, it may be said, learning was not one. At last he responded sourly: "May he fight for you tooth and nail."

"If it please you, Salim," said Khayat with ingenuous indulgence, "the salutation is not well spoken. Tooth and nail of God! They speak so only in Cairo; and there they prostitute the dear Arabic to all manner of extravagances. Merely 'And to you' is the classic, Salim."

"Huh!" ejaculated Shofi contemptuously. He looked Khayat over—with something of the pride of possession in the scrutiny—and continued: "You're my editor. That's all you get paid for."

Now Khayat did not observe the sarcastic inflection. His reply came quickly, with a kindly smile and a deprecating gesture of his

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

lean, brown hand: "Oh, Salim, excellent master, thank me for nothing! God favored me with opportunities. Shall I therefore hoard knowledge? Shall I put a price on so small a teaching when my stomach is full? Ah, I would do as much for the enemy of my mother; for, so doing,"—and here Khayat laughed outright—"I should serve the Language Beautiful. No, Salim, friend and master, I am but the son of a poor goldsmith, and——"

"I say you're not paid for professing me," interrupted Shofi. The words came out like the blows of a hammer as the carpenter drives the nail home.

"Excuse me, Salim, for pointing out that you cannot form the verb from the noun so," said Khayat, still mistaking the significance of the inflection. There was a touch of tenderness in his earnestness—a broadening sweetness in his smile.

"*Bass baqua!*" screamed Shofi. This is a brutal vulgarity for "Stop!" and hardly to be translated.

Khayat cowered from the words—even jerked his head to one side; in so far, they had the physical effect of a blow aimed straight from

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

the shoulder. He had mistaken sarcasm for appreciation—he was humiliated; his friendly criticism had given pain—this was the greater regret. He was crushed, like a child impatiently cuffed for mischief done through love. He *was* a child—gentle old Khayat! And moreover, since, as I have said, he was afraid of the world, a picture of himself took form in his mind: an old, gaunt man, in tattered brown clothes, pressing timidly against the window of a pastry-cook's shop, looking wistfully at the fresh *baklava* and great, round cakes of bread—pressing very close to get out of the way of the crowd that was rushing from its work to its home and its supper and its bed. He had a great fear of idleness and the streets, had Khayat.

“Here—what's this?” asked Shofi. He had picked up the half-written page from the desk, and was looking at, the shadow of impotent curiosity over his handsome, full-featured face.

Khayat giggled nervously. He looked up confidently enough. He was sure of the story; sure that it was a good story, and made him valuable to his employer.

“It is the little story,” he said, “The Sultan

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

at the Bar of Civilization.” He had an anxious hand waiting for the return of the page. Quick as the reference to it, his eyes had snapped delightedly. Now he had almost forgotten the rebuff. “The summons for trial is now given, and I am about to——” Shofi crumpled the page to a ball and tossed it out of the window with an ejaculation of contempt. Khayat followed its flight, and saw it caught by the wind and swirled into the topmost branches of the scrawny, shaggy-headed old tree that still swished its new-grown leaves in the cheerful sunlight, though it had just taken, as to a grave, a little story. The rain would fall on the crumpled ball, he thought, to its unfolding and the obliteration of the written words. Rain and sun and wind would bedraggle and rot it, and the thoughts of a man would pass into nothingness. Shofi was suddenly become another in his servant’s sight—a power, indeed—an illiterate, old Khayat thought, who could kick a prop from under the crumbling patriotism of a people.

“Abo-Samara held the—thing up to scorn in Fiani’s place last night. Am I to be so shamed by a—fakir like him?” Shofi asked

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

sharply. "The story is—is stuff."

Hard masters are up to many tricks; they distribute praise and sneers discreetly; a worker who is afraid of the world is best kept to heel with a whip. Shofi knew how to deal with his prize possession. Khayat flushed and gripped the desk, and flushed deeper; and turned his head to keep the sight of his agony from Shofi. Abo-Samara's words were of no weight, as all men knew; but they had raised a ghost—a comparison of the little story with the writings of Abo Elola Elmoarri. Now Khayat had been brought to a condition of meet humility; so Shofi was ready to proceed.

"Write no more of the story," he said. "It is no *damn* good. Now it is rent day and I must go about my other business. Stop writing about the Sultan—leave him alone for awhile. Shall we forever speak against this man? He is not such a bad king. What has he done to me that I should knock him from his throne? Are not the little lead things mine to speak as I shall say? So-ho! *Kawkab Elborriah* gives me no health"—Shofi had heard MacNamara of the corner saloon say that he was not in politics for his



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

health—"and I must get something. The story had stirred the people. The Minister at Washin'ton has heard. Hadji, the Consul's servant, came to me last night,"—Shofi puffed out his chest—"knowing me for a man of influence. It must stop. And now, Khalil Khayat, may God give you health this day and all the days of many years to come."

What does a timorous man do when he knows, of a sudden, that he must give up his great purpose or his living? He cries to himself: "Oh, why?" Khayat was blind to intrigue; but these words were luminous. In a little while, he understood.

"Salim," he asked deliberately, bitterly, "what price did the Consul put upon your honor?"

"Sh-h-hh!" exclaimed Shofi, looking fearfully about, as though an enemy might be concealed under the table or have his ear to the key-hole. "We are not in the desert. Sh-h-hh, in God's name!"

"How much was it, Salim?"

"Whisper—whisper, Khalil! Sufficient—sufficient, it was."

"How many dollars?"

"Khalil, you are my friend—not my servant.

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

Let this be a secret between you and me," Shofi whispered, his mouth close to Khayat's ear. "Four—hun-dred—*dollars*, it was!" Shofi drew back to see Khayat stare.

"The Arabs say," observed the old man calmly, "that the devil keeps a price-list of men's souls. It may be so."

"And now, peace be with you, Khalil," said Shofi briskly. "I must collect my rents." He buttoned his top coat and moved toward the door.

"Tarry, Salim," said Khayat. "The day is long." There was a certain easy authority in his tone and gesture. He did not observe whether or not Shofi waited; but let his head sink on his breast and closed his eyes. "I have something to think about," he added, and smiled.

Let it be said again: Khayat was afraid of men. He knew that the street was about to swallow him. That was now inevitable, and, therefore, not bothersome. He thought not at all; or, if he thought, it was in a fleeting way of the crumpled little story: of the chance of climbing to its rescue, even to the slenderest branch of the old tree; of smoothing it out and neatly folding it, that it might

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

be put away snug in the big, black pocket-book upstairs, safe from rotting; of giving it the fulness of life—some day. It was a story to live—that dear little one. But rain and wind were implacable. The people would be sorry to hear of its death.

In this abstraction Khayat got up and put on his old brown coat, never looking at Shofi; and pulled his rusty hat firmly to the back of his head with both hands, as always; and tucked the Abo Elola Elmoarri under his arm; and looked about the room with tender regret—at the littered, dusty desk, at the garish couch that stretched its uneven length against the opposite wall, at the book-shelves in the corner, with their tattered occupants—like a man bound from home on a long journey. Then he put Elmoarri on the desk and went to the book-shelves; and touched some books fondly with his finger-tip, and dusted some on his sleeve, and read the titles of all, and made the shelves neat. In this he seemed nearly to forget that he was to go. Shofi heard him mutter caressingly over a book here and a book there; and saw him take a little one down and slip it into his pocket, and try vainly to put a larger one

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

in the other pocket and then return it to its place with a sigh; and Shofi conjectured that the old man had not the courage to leave them.

Khayat was in no tremor of emotion when he turned to address Shofi. It was a matter of course that he should be leaving. He filled and lit his pipe, and got it going well, before he spoke.

"You have shown your servant many kindnesses in these years, O Shofi," he said.

"They shall be remembered for ever. It is a regret to me that I cannot serve the Sultan with you. You have been very good. I am not worthy of such consideration. Some day—when I have found another place—I shall return for my books. May it please you, Salim, to leave them so. They are not in the way; and my successor may have use for them. Let him use them as he will; being careful of the worn ones. Health be with you by favor of God, Salim, and may prosperity attend!"

Khayat tucked Elmoarri under his arm again, and went out, stepping firmly.

Now Shofi had been thinking of profit and loss. It appeared to him that a steadfast

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

policy might, after all, be an asset worth more than the Consul's four hundred dollars. The people's suspicion was to be reckoned with. And Khayat was no mean asset. Shofi was frightened, and ran to the door to call the editor back.

"Khalil! Khalil!" he shouted. "Come back! I must think it over."

Khayat was then at the glue-agent's door—within hearing; but he was deep in the hopelessness of his case. Though the words of recall rattled on his ear-drums, they were not admitted, not interpreted.

"Khalil! Khalil!" Shofi screamed. "I *must* think it over."

Shofi was now ready to permit the continuation of the little story; but Khayat was out of hearing on the pavement, looking up and down the street, aimless and afraid to venture forth. Shofi went back huffed, and sat down to brood.

I do not know where Khayat went—he has forgotten; but there are many places in that neighborhood which are comfortable to men who shrink from militant contact with the world. Doubtless he wandered here and there through them all: now sitting down to read,



## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

now dozing in the sunshine; in crowded places alert, and puffing his pipe nervously. A man can sit on the docks and watch the ships slip down with the tide, and forget necessity; there is a soothing mystery in the creaking, battered, disordered vessels and their smell of sunny climes—a suggestive whither—that excludes all worry and regret; a bench in Battery Park is a place to wonder and wish, when the harbor is busy and the wind is not keen. South Street and Whitehall and the Battery must have laughed as the queer old fellow dodged apologetically along—the odd figure, in old-fashioned, old clothes, a big black book tight under his arm, a short black pipe in his mouth; swarthy, villainously unshaven, dreaming. Does a good man sell himself without a fight? Then there must have been a fight. Khayat has forgotten what he thought about, but there was a fight at one time or other that afternoon—a hard-fought fight. I think the thoughts of Abo Elola Elmoarri must have been his at intervals; perhaps he turned the dingy sails and nervous little tugs and thin haze and blue and green and distant cries into poetry of his own in the Language Beautiful. But I am

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

sure that he had, continuously, an oppressive consciousness of the loss of an influence that made for a great good. His imagination played pranks with him in crises like this; there must have been a call to martyrdom in his visions of oppression—of blood and ravishment. Khayat would not sell himself without a fight. There was a period of agony—a series of emotions, which he could not control, culminating in a resolution. In the dusk, when the roar of the elevated trains, as they swept, flashing, round the curve to South Ferry, gathered up the street clamor and made it terrible, he was frightened. Then he decided.

Khayat threaded his way through the Quarter to the pastry shop of Nageeb Fiani, and turned in to speak a word with Salim Shofi, whose custom it was to drink coffee over a green baize table in the little back room at that hour of the evening. He was clammy all over, and pale; his eyes were as though hiding in the depths of their sockets, and his throat was dry.

Shofi was there, elegantly lolling, and had his narghile bubbling, and his coffee steaming hot.

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

"Salim," said Khayat abruptly, "I have thought of a way whereby this matter may be arranged."

Now Shofi had already determined to yield. Patriotism, he had concluded, would pay best in the long run. He was even ready to soothe Khayat with a better salary.

"Peace be un——" he began affably.

Khayat raised his hand to stop him; and Shofi saw that the palm was bruised and bloody, as though the finger nails had sunk into the flesh.

"The Consul offers you four hundred dollars," Khayat continued, speaking earnestly, quickly, as though he would not brook interruption. "Are there not fifty-two weeks in every year, and, therefore, might not fifty-two dollars be saved each year if a man put away one dollar every week? In four hundred weeks a man might save four hundred dollars. Let four hundred be divided by fifty-two, and the result is seven and seventy-one hundredths, more or less—seven years and seventy-one hundredth parts of a year. Now, in seventy-one hundredth parts of a year there are thirty-six weeks, and in thirty-six weeks nine months. Is it not so?"

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Salim, in your generosity, I am permitted to have seven dollars each week for my services. Six are enough for my needs." Khayat did not pause before the prevarication, nor was he shamefaced as he went on: "It is nothing but a little coffee and a little tobacco less—perchance, a little more than that. Seven years and nine months will I serve you, Salim Shofi, for six dollars each week, if so be that I may write for liberty. What is your answer?"

Khayat leaned far over the table and fixed his eyes on Shofi's. He seemed to fear a negative answer.

"Seven years?" repeated Shofi. He was staring at Khayat.

"Seven years, nine months and some days, which, at another time, can be numbered. Salim, your answer—in the sight of God, our God, your answer!"

Shofi wondered what the fathomable depth of this man's simplicity might be.

"I am content," he said.

"Then may God bind fast the agreement between us." Khayat sighed and smiled, and continued, impulsively: "I must now go to the office. I have wasted a day, Salim. I must

## THE LAMP OF LIBERTY

catch up with my work. I must hurry to it. You will excuse me, Salim, if you please. The paper for to-morrow must be written. I am happy again—ah, quite happy; and it is to your generosity I owe it. May you be blessed forever! Salim, may happiness be yours through life!”

Khayat rattled on in a nervous, absent way, as he backed to the threshold, as though bent on shutting off an invitation to drink coffee. The passion for the little story was on him again. He had no time to spare. Shofi let him escape, and then burst out laughing. Khayat tripped his way to the office, radiantly happy; and scattered incoherent good wishes right and left, and so earnestly that the little people of the gutters wondered to see their friend blither than themselves. The little story was forming again, now sure of life. Khayat stepped with the lightness of a youth in rosy love. The trees of Battery Park heard cracked, quavering snatches of a strange Eastern song, as he went lilting by. And the desk was never cuddled closer, nor the pencil more fondly clutched, than when he sat down to write.

. . . . .



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

The last words were written when the lamp and the sun were fighting for the grimy window pane—the one trying to beat the other back; and these were the words:

“And Civilization, rising before the princes of the earth and all the eminent men thereof, said: ‘I am not a man to give the judgment of men. Therefore, shall the sentence not be death.’ Now as soon as he had said this two angels, the one on the right hand of the Sultan and the other on his left, lifted up a white banner over his head; and upon the banner was written the sentence in letters of black, that all might read. And Civilization, reading, said. ‘Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, this is the sentence: In the fear of the dagger and the poisoned cup shall you live a long life; in unrest, by day and by night, shall you spend it; and there shall be no love for you, nor any other happiness. And the Sultan prayed rather for death.’”

Khayat laid down his pencil, and lifted the window, that the dawn might rest him; and he looked out over the quiet city to the night's furthest limit, and was rested.

Long, long before, Salim Shofi had fallen asleep as he smiled.

ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN



IN THE ABSENCE OF MRS.  
HALLORAN



HE screaming of the child in the next room suddenly subsided into wailing; and Khalil Khayat, the old editor of *Kawkab Elhorriah*,—knew that the day's causeless beating was over. Mrs. Halloran had quit through very exhaustion; and, intent on reviving draughts, she shuffled along the hallway and clattered down the stair, blowing, and railing blatantly between breaths. She groped her way in reckless wrath; but the hall's darkness was safely familiar—for she was drunk—and her left hand knew the shattered stair post, and her feet the sunken floor strip and broken step; so the tenants soon heard the last of her.

Khayat sustained his interest in the sad philosophy of Abo Elola Elmoarri, that lay open in his lap, until the sobbing on the other side of the partition appealed to him out of the near silence that the going of Mrs. Halloran gave. He closed the big

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

black book, and laid it, with fleeting regret, in its place, and stood musing in the thin sunshine that the shadow of the opposite building had chased to his window sill. He listened to the shouts of the children in the street far below, where, in the first freedom of spring, they sported, swarming, making the most of the day's end; and fine simplicity made music of shrill cries for him, so that he smiled, and blessed his God, in his own way, that the little children of other men should so shed light into his dark dwelling-place. Then he bethought himself of the present distress of the boy, his friend—who, of all in the great tenement, called him Mister Khayat and never Khayat the Dago nor (ah, the bitterness of the name, for he was a Christian and a Syrian) Khayat the Turk—and sighed, and tiptoed in to tell him a story, as he had often done.

Mrs. Halloran's scrawny last-born was stretched out prone on the floor in the deeper dusk near the table's sound leg. Khayat gathered him in his arms, hearing never a whimper of protest, and lifted him out of the window to the fire-escape. Billy Halloran had to be lifted over high places;



## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

for he was a cripple from birth, and had pains in his back and his leg half the days. He bestowed his body comfortably against a tub; and Khayat, with imperturbable deliberation, climbed out after him, and squatted with his back against the railing. Sitting so in the sunshine, he lit the precious short pipe the Oxford professor had given him in the days of foolishness, when he longed to touch the liberty that men from the West boasted, and told Billy Halloran the story he had liked to hear best, long, long ago and far away, when he was a child on his mother's knee:—

“Long ago—ver-ee long ago—there leeve a Keen' een Beirout, my home, een Syria; an' he was a Jew. An' een those days a grea-at dragon he come up from the sea,—come crawlin', roarin'—roarin'——”

“W'at's a dragon? I do' know,” Billy plained.

“Ho! W'at ees? A fear-rful creature. Thees dragon's head eet was the head of a serpent; an' hees eyes they were eyes for the night an' for the day, an' green an'—an'—ho, yes—an' green-hot; an' hees tongue eet was a sharp, twistin' flame; an' black

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

smoke an' fires come from hees red nose. Hees bod-ee eet was like a mountain for greatness, an' covered with glees-ten-in' green scales—to hees head, to hees tail an' to the end of eet, which was a spear; an' hees ween's were like the ween's of ten thousan' black bats. Lo, he come roarin' out of the sea, cryin': 'Geeve me somethin' to eat! Geeve me somethin' to eat, for I am hungry!' An' he go to a dark cave een the mountain near the city to leeve there; an' the people fly een great hurry to the city to escape, cryin': 'O Keen', O mighty Keen', our Keen', save us from the jaws of the dragon!' "

"W'at kin a King do?"

"Ver-ee powerful man, a Keen'. Ho, yes! He——"

"Like a cop?"

"Much more—very, ver-ee powerful. He——"

"Like de roun'sman, Hogan?"

"Yes, yes; as——"

"Like MacNamarra? Naw, 'e ain't!"

"MacNamarra? W'at ees he, MacNamarra?"

"De block does w'at 'e says, you bet. 'E's a alderman."

"As twelve hun'ed MacNamarras!" exclaimed Khayat.

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

"Gee!" said Billy, and dismissed the matter as beyond comprehension.

"Now, I know that thees the story my mother have told me as a leetle chil' eet ees true," Khayat went on; "for I have seen the cave, an' the print of the dragon's claws een the very rock. Ah! my eyes shall see the mountain side nevermore. Oh, oh, I am sad—so ver-ee sad! No more shall I go back. Oh, oh! For do they not look for me to keel me? Oh, cruel! W'at——"

"Eh? W'at 'd y'u do?" asked Billy, with an extraordinary access of interest.

"I have so much write against the Sultan of Turkey," Khayat answered gravely. "An' een Aleppo—sh-h-hh!—I keel three Mohammeden—I, myself. My seester—you would not understan'—eet was for my seester I shed blood. God he strength my arm an' sharp my knife."

"Was y'u pinched?"

"I escape," said Khayat quietly.

"Did y'u git it off?"

"Off?"

"De blood. One-lip Bill says it won't come off 'is'and. 'E's left-'anded, an' w'en 'e stabbed Yellow Mag de knife——"

## · THE SOUL OF THE STREET

“Sh-h-hh! I talk no more of eet. Well, I can go back—no. Eet ees God’s weel. Eet matters not for you. Enough! Yes, I have seen the cave an’ know eets darkness; an’ the print of the dragon’s feet I have touch with my fingers. So I know the story my mother have told me ees true, every word. I now tell eet to you.”

Khayat lit his pipe again, and Billy got his bad leg in a more comfortable position.

“Now, the dragon beegen to devour the people,” Khayat resumed, “seekin’ out the children first; an’ day an’ night the people gather before the palace gates, cryin’: ‘O Keen’, O mighty Keen’, save our lives, an’ the lives of our leetle ones!’ After many days the Keen’ hearken to the voices of hees people, an’, standin’ before all, said: ‘O my people, my beloved ones, who weel keel the dragon for me, hees Keen’?’ An’ no man speak; for they have all great fear. Then deed the Keen’ cry once more: ‘O my people, my beloved ones, who are like to my eyes so dear, heem who breen’ to me the head of thees dragon weel I make a preence een my house.’ Yet deed no man say one word. Then the Keen’ call the wise men to

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

heem, an' consider what could he do; an', after, one go to the dragon een hees cave an' make a bargain with heem for the Keen', agreein' to geeve each day one chil' an' one sheep, eef only the dragon be good; an' the dragon he was content. So the people return to their homes an' have peace; an' every day the lot eet was cast by the wise men, an' out of many families was geeve a dear son, an' out of many folds a sheep. The dragon he grow fat an merry.

"By an' by, eet come the turn of the Keen', who have no son, but only one beautiful daughter. Now the Keen' did weep; for he love hees daughter as he love nothin' else, an' he would not give her to the dragon. But the wise men say to heem: 'O Keen', O Keen', O Keen', our sons have we geeve without weepin' before all men. Who among us ees faithless, O our Keen'? Geeve, we pray, your daughter with a sheep to the dragon.' The Keen' he answer an' say: 'O the people of Beirout, the chief city of my keen'dom, who will take my keen'dom, an' save to me my daughter?' An' the people cry: 'O Keen', our Keen', deed your servants not keep their word? May eet please you,



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

master, to give your daughter with a sheep to the dragon—oh, please!’ An’ again deed the Keen’ beseech a man to take hees keen’dom, an’ save hees daughter. The people cry: ‘Keen’, your daughter to the dragon!’ Three times the Keen’ he call to the people, an’ the people answer as they have done.

“At last the Keen’ turn to hees servants an’ order them to take a white sheep an’ wash heem ver-ee clean; an’ to hees woman servants he say, ‘Dress my daughter, your meestress, een her finest raiment, an’ put a white veil over her face, for she ees to die.’ Then he go eento an eener room of hees palace, an’ mourn een a loud voice, so the people they deed hear heem. The servants deed as they were told; an’ when the sun was low on that day, the Keen’, with tears een hees eyes, besought hees daughter to lead the sheep to the place where the dragon was. Hees daughter bow before him an’ say: ‘O my dear father, as your people weel, so I do; an’ een doin’ so I grieve because I do not as you weel.’ At thees speech the Keen’ cry aloud, so ver-ee sad was he; but hees daughter, with greater courage than any

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

woman, go out alone, leadin' the sheep. Now the people follow afar off; and the Keen' was with them. So deed they all go out of the city's gates; an' the Keen' he weep an' cry out all the time: 'Who weel take my keen'dom, an' save my daughter?'—for there was yet time. But the people loved not the Keen' for that he deed not save hees own daughter; an' they were silent, all men of them.

"Now, when the dear lady, leadin' the white sheep, come to the place where the dragon was, she cry: 'O Monster come forth! Here ees blood an' flesh—flesh an' blood of chil' an' beast as the Keen', my father, agree.' An' there come from the mouth of the cave black smoke, grea-at clouds, an' a roarin' from the bowels of the earth. Then the people look up from the plain, where they stan' een one great throng, an' observe with their two eyes, shadin' them from the sun, for eet was even-in'; an' again the Keen' he cry een a voice terrible with grief: 'Oh, oh, who weel take my keen'dom, an' breen' me back my leetle daughter?' Steel were the people silent; but some call upon their God to send an angel from heaven to slay the dragon.

"Then a wonderful theen' eet happen; for

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

afar off on the road was a cloud of dust observed, an' out of the dust come a horseman, ridin' very mad; an' anon there stan' at the side of the Keen's daughter a great knight, with armor of silver an' a helmet of shinin' gold; an' tall feathers wave en the leetle weend above hees helmet, an' a spear he carry een hees han'.

“‘O beauteous lady,’ deed the horseman say to the daughter of the Keen’, ‘how beautiful are you! But why stan’ you here alone with a white sheep, near where the smoke of a fearful dragon come from the mouth of a cave? O, fear not, beauteous one, for I weel slay the dragon.’

“‘An’ the lady tremble, but not of fear, for the voice of the knight eet was gentle; an’ she answer to him: ‘O young man, O young man, fly from thees dreadful place, for the dragon ees a great dragon as ever was, an’ very hungry, for they have not fed heem for four days. Seek not to die for me, but fly quickly.’

“‘Ho, ho!’ said the knight. ‘Ees eet so? A great dragon, an’ not fed for four days! What a joy an’ dignity for me to slay heem!’

“‘Oh, try not,’ said the lady, ‘but fly, fly!’

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

“‘Beauteous lady,’ deed the knight say then, ‘I may not fly from dragons, for I am the Christian George; an’ eef I might, I would not.’

“An’ three times deed the lady beseech heem to go; an’ thrice deed he answer her: ‘Oh, fear not; eet ees my task to slay dragons, an’——’”

“‘Is work?’” Billy Halloran demanded.

“Yes,” answered Khayat, and continued:

“‘Eet ees my work to slay dragons, an’——’”

“‘Is business,—is reg’lar trade?’” Billy asked in wonderment.

“Ay,” said Khayat impatiently, “hees trade—say eet so. An’ the knight he say, ‘An’ slay thees——’”

“Say,” said Billy eagerly, “any chanst fer a willin’ boy over there now—a boy wit’ a bad leg, but willin’—*willin’*——”

“Boy? For what, a boy?”

“Fer dis dragon-slayin’ business. George was on horseback, an’——”

“Sh-h-hh!” said Khayat. “Eet ees all dead now. There ees no more of eet.”

Billy Halloran sighed. “Bloody good business,” he said regretfully, and was silent.

“Well,” Khayat pursued, “the knight he

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

say to the lady: 'I would not fly if I might, while you stan' here all, all alone. Eet will be to me a greater joy, so, to keel the drag——'"

"W're's de dragon all dis time?" Billy interrupted. "Ain't 'e doin' any stunts?"

"Well, the dragon he come roarin' from the cave in terrible wrath; an' smoke an' fire come from hees mouth an' blood sweat from hees belly, so fearful was hees madness. Hees ween's he flap with the noise of a great weend, an' hees claws he stretch as an angry cat; an' the sun fall on the green scales of hees bod-ee an' on the purple scales of hees head, so that they shine brighter than the armor of the knight—ay, with a magic lustre that obscured the sun an' blind the eyes of the people on the plain. Eet ees truth; so deed the scales of the dragon shine unteel God he touch the armor of the Christian George with cool flame; then deed the light een them fade to very blackness een the people's eyes. Then the knight he speak comfort to the lady, an' ride up against the dragon, cryin': 'The Lord for George an' the lady! The Lord geeve help to George!'"

"De Lord, w'at's 'e? I do' know," said Billy.



## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

Khayat, silent, motionless, stared at Billy Halloran.

"Oh, do you not know, boy?" he whispered distressfully at last. "He ees our Father—the Lord Almighty, who——"

"Aw, y'u mean Gawd. W'y don't y'u talk 'Nited States? 'E——"

"Sh-h-hh!" with a gesture of deprecation.

"Well, 'e ain't no business mixin' in de scrap," Billy persisted sullenly, and continued argumentatively: "It ain't no square t'ing fer de dragon. Gawd 'e jumped up an' t'rew sand in de dragon's eyes, didn't 'e, eh? Aw——"

"Stop, boy!" Khayat exclaimed. "Say not so. Oh, do not! Eet ees not so. Oh, no—the story——"

"Well, was Gawd anyw'ere roun' w'en George give de signal?"

"Een heaven he was, O boy! You not know——"

"I know more'n y'u t'ink," said Billy, with a knowing side glance. "A Salvationer tol' me a t'ing or two w'en she fix me leg. Say, y'u can't tell w'ere t' look fer Gawd in them days. 'E might 'a' bin in a tree, an' 'e might 'a' bin in a fire, an' 'e might 'a'

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

bin a stone on de groun' an' y'u wouldn't know it, an' 'e might 'a' bin in de win' an' y'u couldn't see 'im." Billy's voice had taken on a tone of mystery, and his eyes were round; and now he continued plaintively: "I t'ink an' I t'ink, an' I do' know w'at 'e is er—er—I do' know."

"Well, he was een heaven," said Khayat. Billy sighed—for nothing immediate.

"George must 'a' had 'is ally wit' 'im, if Gawd was dere," he said. "G'wan."

It was Khayat's turn to sigh. "The dragon," he said, taking up the thread of his story, "he turn an' go eento hees cave, where no eye could see heem; an' the knight ride up an' shake his spear at the darkness of the cave an' mock the dragon. Then deed the people laugh loud at the dragon; an' the knight cry: 'So cowardly a dragon deed I never see een my life! Come forth an' fight, that I may keel you. See, I throw away my sword, an' my helmet I cast aside. Now have I only my spear; an' my face eet ees bare to your tongue of flame. Come to the sunlight. Geeve me fight for the lady.'

"Now the dragon was a cunnin' fellow, mean-in' all the time to come forth an' keel the

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

Christian George by a treek. Lo, as the people look, even as they laugh most loud, a smoke cloud, black an' theek like a night tempest, eet creep, creep from the mouth of the cave, bein' carried on the breath of the dragon, an' gather round about the knight, an' envelop heem from the people's sight. Then was there terrible fear een the people's hearts, who know much of the treeks of dragons; an' they say, each man to hees own heart: 'Lo, the black cloud ees the poison breath of the dragon, an' the brave knight weel surely perish.' Thrice deed George call upon hees God, an' hees voice was the evenin' prayer bell for sweetness; an' thrice deed he shout hees battle-cry, an' hees voice was as the roarin' of a crouch-ed lion for—for—fear-rfulness. The darkness on the mountain side eet was terrible as night at noonday, an' the people tremble an' cover their faces to conceal the sight of the dragon's magic.

"Lo, the dragon leap forth with smoke an' fire an' great noise, as a shot of iron from a cannon's mouth. Hees tongue eet was as lightnin' een a black storm. Lo, a great roarin' come from the cloud, an' again a roarin', an' for the third time a grea-ater ro-oarin'

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

than ever before. With suddenness deed God gather the smoke een hees han', an' geeve eet to the four weends. Then was there silence as of rest-time, as of a tomb of ten thousan' years, as of hot noon on a desert of no endin'. Lo, the great victory of the Christian George deed affright the people. The knight he stan' by the mouth of the dragon an' hees spear was thrust through the throat of the beast, an' black blood flow from the woun',—ay, a river of black blood. Lo, the dragon was dead; an' the knight was not hurt, even een one sma-all hair of hees head."

"Gee!" the boy ejaculated.

"Now, the Keen' was possessed of so great joy that he could not contain eet een heem, an' ran before the bearers of hees chair, not waitin' for them, to the place where hees daughter stan' with the white sheep. Then he embrace hees daughter three times; for he was so please to see her alive an' the dragon dead. The Christian knight he come to where they stan'; an' the Keen' he say to heem: 'O young man of great courage an' skeel with the spear, favored of God an' beautiful een the eyes of all men, een whose bosom there leeve no fear, neither of the

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

might nor the magic of dragons, come, I pray, you, eat with me of the best een my house an' rest from the terrible conflict.'

"An' the Christian George say: 'O my lord, when I have bury the dragon, then weel I come.'

"Then deed George call for twelve oxen to be brought an' fasten to the dragon's bod-ee with a strong rope, to draw eet to a deep hole; an' so eet was done as he have order. Now the oxen pull, an' again pull they very hard; but they could not move the dragon so much as one eench, so very beeg was he.

"'Oh, breen' to me a cotton thread,' the knight say.

"An' they breen' to heem a cotton thread; an' he tie the thread to the dragon's tooth an' pull the great bod-ee, as a miracle, alone—heemself—with one arm; an' he bury eet een a deep hole. Then, immediately, he go to the Keen's palace; an' as soon as he have come to the door, the Keen' meet heem as equal to heemself, an' beegen to address heem, sayin', 'My son, I have no chil' but only one daughter; an' I would that you marry my daughter, whose life eet ees yours, an' be a son to me, to sit on my throne after me.'



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

"Now when the young lady she have heard thees, she have great fear; for, lo, she love the knight with all the love she have. So queek she run to her women, an' cry to them: 'Oh, take me to my chamber!' So the women look on the Keen' with frowns, an' do as she have said.

"George he bow very low to the Keen' an' say, 'Gracious master, to whom God, my God, grant to leeve one hun'ed years an' more, surely never was there kin'ness like to the great kin'ness have you shown to your unworthy servant. How beauteous ees your dear daughter! What reward more great \_\_\_\_\_,"

"Cheese it!" whispered Billy Halloran. "She's a-comin' back. Can't y'u 'ear 'er?" A creak—prolonged peculiarly, like the wail of a baby in pain—a pause, a ponderous foot-fall, warned Billy Halloran that his mother had reached the seventh step of the last stair, and that there was now no time for the escape of the editor. He stretched his neck through the window, and peered with alert eyes at the door. Khayat got to his knees, and pressed his dark face against the pane above, his heart quaking.

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

"She shall not beat you once more thees day," he whispered, his voice shrill with high resolve. "I, Khalil Khayat, say eet. My arm shall defend you. The Lord God Almighty, the poor servant of heem I am, geeve me strength an' courage to prevail against the woman! Hees enemies, though they be as one thousan' against one, are as one against ten thousan' before hees might. Hees ees the power, and hees shall be the glory for these good deed. Eet ees to heem——"

Billy's chuckling shattered Khayat's rapture. "Know w'at she done t' de ol' man?" Billy asked, mischief in his eye; and he added in warning: "'E's in de 'ospital."

"Her strength I care not for," Khayat answered doggedly. "The strength of God ees mine."

Billy was tempted to prove his mother's single superiority; but just then Mrs. Halloran lurched in, and stood to rest, blinking stupidly at the window. She was drunk near to the point of collapse; and her corpulent body swayed this way and that, its besting of her exhausted legs imminent. Her face was loose: it was as though intelligence had left her in disgust. Matted strands of hair hung

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

in the way of her eyes, and she swept her great grimy hand across her brow at sudden intervals, but vainly. Her dress was undone at the throat, revealing the degradation of uncleanness and the depth of her poverty. It was now a step—then a step—a fearful fight to keep upright—always a groping after handholds, as she made her way towards the mattress in the corner.

Billy instinctively pushed Khayat back from the sight, and, of a sudden overcome by the humiliation of his presence, began to cry. He sobbed and sobbed, turning himself away from comfort, and at last asked sharply, returning to the story, "Did 'e marry 'er?"

"The people een Beirout say to thees very day," Khayat answered, "that the Keen's daughter wept many days an' at last she died of the strange seekness of heart—eet ees call love."

"Huh!" said Billy.

There was a heavy fall in the room that seemed to shake the house. Mrs. Halloran had lain down.

"Lobster if 'e'd 'adone it," Billy said, drying his eyes.

## ABSENCE OF MRS. HALLORAN

"To take her for hees wife—ah, no, no," Khayat said in protest.

Billy puzzled.

"A beauteous lady!" Khayat pursued. "Ah, no!" and he looked away.

Billy gave him a knowing leer. "One-lip Bill, me frien'," he said, "says it ain't neces-s'ry."

Now Khayat did not understand; so his gentle old face did not sadden this time. He clambered through the window and crept like a cat to his own room, to resume the reading of Abo Elola Elmoarri's sad philosophy in the big black book; and, later, into the night, to write wisdom concerning the oppression of his own people, for the men of his race to read in their own tongue, in the little restaurant of lower Washington Street, where his thoughts are to be found in a new *Kawkab Elborriah*, every evening—that they might ponder, perchance to their awakening, some day. And Billy Halloran was left alone on the fire-escape, in the dusk and chill of evening, between the things of home, that repelled him, and the romp and laughter of the street, far below, that were greatly to be desired, but were out of the

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

reach of a little boy who chanced to be a  
cripple from birth.



THE GREATEST PLAYER IN ALL  
THE WORLD



## GREATEST PLAYER IN ALL THE WORLD



HE doctor wore the only silk hat in the Quarter—an alien, supercilious high hat that coolly asserted the superiority of the head under it as it bobbed along. It was rusty and ruffled, antiquated as a stove-pipe; but it was no less important to the influence of his words than his degree from the Faculté de Médecine de Constantinople and the fame of his skill. It was a silent, sly declaration-intent of distinguished position—an inexhaustible inspiration to dignity in a squalid environment, and, always, it brought salaams from right and left, and a clear way. For the pristine gloss of it, and for the militant manner of superiority that accompanied its wearing, the simple tenement-dwellers of lower Washington Street—which is the neighborhood of the great soap factory, and the hive of expatriated Syrians—accounted the doctor equal with MacNamarra of the corner saloon, who wore his only on Tuesdays, when the Board

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

of Aldermen met, and on certain mysterious occasions—such as when the Irish have sprigs of green on their coat lapels. This was important to Nageeb Fiani, the dreamer, who had a pastry-cook for a partner, and kept a little shop just where the long shadow of the soap-factory chimney reaches at two o'clock of a midsummer afternoon. The people knew for themselves that there was no greater musician than he from Rector Street to the Battery and in all the colonies of the Quarter; but the Doctor Effendi said that there was none greater in all Syria!

There came a time when the doctor—that important one!—said even more. When Salim, the little son of his sister, coughed his last, and sighed most plaintively—and sighed—and gasped—and surrendered to the lung trouble, Fiani denied himself speech and sleep for three days and three nights, and caught a tearful strain from the music that sounded always in his soul's ears—enraving—elusive; even as he himself has said.

On the second of the lonely nights, Khalil Khayat, the editor, made his accustomed way to the little back room of the pastry-cook's shop for coffee and congenial company; and

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

he was early. Immediately Cillal Tahan, the thrifty partner—he who was the cook—went to him, wailing: “Oh, Khalil, Khalil, misfortune has fallen upon me! I am crushed flat like a cake! O-o-o-o-o! Agh! Now for two days has Nageeb, the idle, had the key turned upon himself. Would that I were two men in one! Can a man be in the kitchen and at the counter at the same time? If I cook, I cannot sell, and if I sell, I cannot cook. And how can a man sell that which he has not cooked? Must a cook sell? Is the dog to be harnessed to the plow? Am I to sell or cook—or cook what I sell—or sell—o-o-o-o!” Tahan collapsed utterly under his perplexities. He panted his indignation; every vagrant hair of his great mustache quivered, and his red, starting eyes overflowed; he flung himself into a chair, threw his apron over his head and wailed on unintelligibly.

“*Bass!*” exclaimed Khalil Khayat, severely. “It is a saying: ‘I save my tears for times of sorrow.’ It may be that Nageeb Fiani plays on the violin?”

“Like a rusted shutter swinging in the tempest. O-o-o! There is no end to it.



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Though I beat on the door with a rolling pin he will not stop."

Khayat smiled in his kindly way. Then he sniffed—abruptly. "Had the watchman not slept," he said, significantly, stopping to sniff again, "the vineyard would have yielded fruit in more abundant——"

"Toshi, Toshi!" screamed Tahan. "Thou idiot! The *backlaw* is burning." He was already in the kitchen, leaving two chairs, legs uppermost, and the half of his apron in his track.

Then Khalil Khayat, with the light of pure, sanguine curiosity in his eyes, tiptoed up to the room where Nageeb Fiani sat in darkness with his violin, and he put his ear to the keyhole and listened—and listened—and put his ear closer, and held it so until his old back ached; and so still was he that the rats scampered madly over the dark hall floor, in all unconcern, surely taking him for a bit of furniture newly moved in. He listened a long time; and when he got to his corner downstairs his coffee was cold, and the coal on his narghile, turned from red to gray, had eaten up half the tobacco. He said no word that night; so no man knew what great

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

thing was being done. But there was that in his solemn, wondering silence that led men to say, when he had gone: "*Kawkab Elhorriah* of to-morrow will be worth the money Salim Shofi asks for it. Khalil Khayat has been thinking great thoughts for writing. It may that he is to attack the Sultan again." On the third night, Nageeb Fiani came out of his room; and, when the rain had swept the noisy night traffic from the street, he played the new-born music for his friends, and his friends' friends in the back room of the shop. It was then that the doctor, moved even to tears and sobs, solemnly said there was no greater player in all the world, and rising, called upon the company to drink the health of Nageeb Fiani, his friend, the master of the violin.

"Aie-e-e!" all the people cried.

Now Fiani opened his eyes and looked up; and he was as though awakened suddenly from dreams of distant gardens. He rose to drink, as the custom is, and his glass was held high when the swarthy, bearded face of the doctor, and the pungent smoke that enwreathed it, and the naked gas, flaring behind, had not yet resumed their kindly

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

familiarity. He was sweating and white from the sorrow that mothered the music; his heart was pumping so fast that it dammed his throat with blood, so the arrack would not down; and he spluttered and sank into his chair, wordless. Whereupon Khouri, the rich merchant, puffed upon his narghile so hard that he sucked the reeking water into his mouth, and spluttered, also; and Sadahala, the scoffer and scholar, grasped for the almonds and got the salt instead, and munched it without knowing the difference, as Yusef, the boy, has told; and all the people cried "Aie-e-e!" again, and rapped the table until the little cups leaped half an inch and spilled their scented contents over the green baize cloth. Then Khalil Khayat, that great writer, said he would write a song for the new music, to be sung in the winter evenings; but never did, for he could not find such tenderness in words.

All this came to the ears of the Quarter, and, then, no man of it doubted that Nageeb Fiani was indeed the greatest player in all the world; and certain persons, being curious concerning the matter, went to Abotanos, the Archimandrite's servant, who was a man in

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

Aleppo (by some called Haleb) when Fiani was a grimy child there.

"Tell us," they said, catching him dozing in the sunshine in Battery Park, "what manner of child Nageeb Fiani was."

Abotnios screwed his gray, old face into a knowing leer. "O-ho!" he said, "you wish to know. Oh no! I am too wily for that. I will not tell you." And he would say nothing until he was persuaded that there was no money in the knowledge for any man. Then he answered, speaking as thus: Fiani liked the music when he was a little lad—oh, very small, surely not higher than the top of the bench—and an idle one, caring nothing for the profit of his father's business; and he was quick to hear the tinkle and cry, and always ready to quit work or play—it mattered not—to lie under the window and listen, and listen, and dream. And when the famous Antoon il Halabee, the Egyptian, came to reside at Aleppo, Fiani was twelve years old, and would sit at his feet; and the father of the boy said that he might, and paid much money for the privilege, for he was a good man, and Nageeb would not rise from the floor nor stop his wailing until the words were

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

spoken. For years Nageeb learned of Antoon il Halabee; then a time came when at Safireh and Danu (which are near by) they wished to hear him; then he played at other places, many miles away: at length the people of Aleppo began to say that young Nageeb Fiani played better than Antoon il Halabee, his master; whereupon the lessons came to an end, and the Egyptian betook himself to Cairo, where he now lives. Did not all men know that the fame of Fiani had extended from his home-town to Nejm and Killis, to Marah and Halebi, to the cities by the sea, and even to the rim of the Great Desert? Was he not known in Cairo? Had his name not been spoken in Constantinople? "Sure!" Abotonios concluded, positive to the pitch of indignation. "They play his music in Syria to this very day, as the Doctor Effendi knows. There is none greater than he." The old man shambled off, laughing scornfully that there should be found men with ears to doubt this thing.

When the spirit of revolution stalked abroad—as may be set down another time—the Minister from Turkey came of a direful whim to the Quarter. To the doctor, as the most



## THE GREATEST PLAYER

important of the Sultan's Syrian subjects in Washington Street, Hadji, servant to the Consul General, first gave notification of his coming. The Important One, having artfully concealed the chagrin for which, as he knew, the practised Hadji was keenly spying, dispatched Nageeb, the Intelligent, Abo-Samara's little son, to inform the Archimandrite and the rich men of the Quarter, and put a flea in his ear, no more to give speed to the message than to impress the Consul's servant with his loyal appreciation of the great honor. Then he sent Hadji off to his master to say that the devoted subjects of His Benign Majesty, the Sultan—to whom might God, their God, give every good and perfect gift, as it is written—alien from his rule through hard necessity, but ever mindful of their heritage, his service, would as little children, kiss the hand of him whom God had blessed with the high favor of the ruler of precious name. Having thus provided for his establishment in the good graces of the Minister, the Doctor locked the dispensary door and threaded his way through the buzzing Quarter, seeking one Abo-Samara to warn him to whisper no sedition on that night as he

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

valued the life of his father in Aleppo—as may be told again; seeking, also, Nageeb Fiani to command his presence at the reception to play love songs for the Minister.

“Nageeb,” the doctor said, whispering nervously and in haste, “the Minister has come from Washin’ton.”

“The Minister! from Washin’ton!”

“Himself!”

“Ah-h-h! Is it so?” Ffani stared into the doctor’s restless little eyes, and his cigarette shook in his fingers—for why, his bashfulness told him.

“Within one hour he will be in the meeting room of the Orthodox Church. I—myself—have arranged it!”

“The Minister!”

“The very Minister from Washin’ton! It is so.” The doctor stopped suddenly; then continued in short, swift sentences: “I will have you play, Nageeb. I am as your brother. I will do this thing for you, that your fame may be increased. Yes, yes—I will.”

“And I am to play!” Ffani tried to roll another cigarette; but his yellow fingers trembled so that he could not.

“By my love and favor, Nageeb.” The

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

doctor puffed out his chest; his eyes bulged with the importance of the matter. "All things are as I will—by order of the Consul."

Now, Fiani cared more for the chatter of children than for the praise of great men; more for silence and familiar things than for a high seat in a public place.

"Doctaire," he said weakly, plaintively, his eyes in awkward interest, on the gas flame, "What a great player is Tanous Shishim!" Gathering confidence, he continued: "Who excels him in swiftness and sweetness on the canoun? Let——"

"Nageeb," the doctor flashed, frowning, "the Arabs say that he who fears to trust his own arm will not prosper. This night shall you play love songs for the Minister." Out he strutted, his head held high, and left Fiani in a fever of trepidation, knowing that what the doctor commanded must surely come to pass.

The Minister was gracious and sober when Fiani began to play.

"Ah-h!" he exclaimed, commanding silence. "An artist! M-m-m!" He nodded his head in time, and sang: "La, la, la, la; la-a-a-

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

a, a-a, o-o-o-o." Now he was tapping the floor with his feet and swaying his head and gently clapping his hands. Fiani lost consciousness of the circle of dark, glowing eyes fixed upon him. "La-a-a-a-a," the Minister sang, and the people hummed with him, swaying their bodies as he did. "La, la, la-o-o-o-e-e-e-o. An artist!" the Minister exclaimed again. "A great player!"

"Aie-e-e!" the people cried, and again: "Aie-e-e! Aie-e-e-e!" They noted the Minister's words, and nodded and nodded, each to the other as though to say: "It is even so. Nageeb Fiani is the greatest player in all the world." Awe touched the respect with which they looked upon him.

The doctor was the patron of all deserving persons; having a deep, red heart, and a pure little delight in the display of his influence. Now when, at last, the Minister—his eyes being heavy from the arrack, and the fingers of the Master weary with much playing—promised with maudlin munificence to decorate Fiani with the Medal of Art from Constantinople (which never came), at once the doctor was persuaded that there was not room enough in Washington Street for the

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

glory of this Master, and puzzled how his fame might be spread to the shadowy upper city—even to the palaces of the princes of the American people. In such pre-occupation, he scandalously bungled the compliments he had shaped for the last address to the Minister—and suffered a commensurate loss of reputation in consequence.

“O Nageeb, talented one,” he exclaimed, as, in the after-glow of the night’s honors, they went swiftly, arm in arm, toward the pastry-cook’s shop, “it is not enough that the people of Washin’ton Street should praise you. Is your genius to be concealed from the great American people? It must not be so. I, myself, will arrange the matter, and thereby you will have greater glory and much—much money.”

The doctor tapped himself on the chest and twisted his mustache to a proud angle. Fiani seemed to ponder his words; but, at length he said, abruptly: “The Minister is a good man; therefore, is his master, the Sultan, a good man. What is all this foolish talk of revolution? He said: ‘He is an artist.’”

“I heard the very words with my own ears,” said the doctor.



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

When they came to the little back room of the shop, Fiani called for coffee and narghiles, clapping his hands sharply. He was strung to the highest pitch, and there was a new, strident note of authority in his voice that made Yusef, the boy, stop and turn and stare—and go on slowly, wondering what had shriveled this man's gentleness of bearing. Soon the steaming cups were set out, the coals on the narghiles glowing, the water bubbling busily, the air heavy with smoke; the while, the contents of the cups exhaled a sweet, familiar perfume, obscuring all perception of the variance in the ways of peoples. The doctor leaned far over the table—Fiani stretched his neck; they brought their heads together, and talked as two conspirators.

"And now, Nageeb Fiani, greater glory is your due," the doctor whispered.

"I am a great player," Fiani said, reflectively, "a grea-at player!" He sent a great whiff of smoke swirling toward the gas flame, and absently watched it spread and disperse.

"You must have more money—much more."

"Call to mind what the Minister said. Did you hear——"

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

"Yes, and again yes; he said 'an artist.'"

"Ah-h-h!"

"You are to have the Medal of Art from Constantinople. It is a great honor."

"Ah-h-h-h!" Fiani threw back his head and looked the doctor in the eyes with a sure proud smile. He toyed with the long tube of the narghile, twisting it into odd shapes.

"Ah-h!" he sighed again. "I am indeed a grea-at player. As a child I knew it, and now all men know it, even from the lips of the Minister himself."

"There is no greater artist," said the doctor.

"Now, Nageeb Fiani, I know it for established truth." He tapped the table with his finger tips, to emphasize his words, as he said: "Is your name to be spoken but in Washin'ton Street? Is your music to sound only in the ears of the people of cellars and little rooms, wherein men live like sheep in a great ship? Shall this delight be withheld from the ears of the great American people? It must not be so. Leave the arrangement of the matter to me."

"How many months must pass before I pin the medal here—in this place?" Fiani traced a circle on his waistcoat, over his heart.

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Swift, exclusive thought was contorting the doctor's face; at that moment there was no place in his bristling pate for such trivial speculation. After a silence, which Fiani had no interest to disturb, being busy with his own dreams, the doctor said, quickly: "I have thought of a way. Yes—yes! It is a sure way for wary feet. Nageeb Fiani, whom honor approaches, perchance you will soon be musician to the Mayor of N' York."

"Who is this man?"

"He is the ruler of the city." The doctor paused and continued, doubtfully frowning: "Yet I have heard that there is one greater—whom they call the Boss."

"Ah," exclaimed Fiani, catching at the familiar word. "It is for him the *p'leecem'n* take tribute."

"It is so," said the doctor. "But the Mayor is great enough, for does he not keep the keys of the treasury in his pocket?"

"He will have to pay much," Fiani said, positively, "for so great a player——"

"Nageeb," the doctor interrupted, speaking impressively, "it may be that you have seen the Great Desert? Then, I say, if every grain of sand were a golden *dollar*, the sum

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

of all would not equal to the wealth of this people!"

"Doctaire, y-you are my friend," Fiani stammered, staring. "I am in your hands henceforth."

The doctor went home with his shoulders back and his silk hat tipped haughtily forward. He pulled his mustache and puffed out his chest, thinking of the fortune he had brought to Fiani, as though it were already accomplished, until he jumped into bed; and when he got up in the morning he still had the artless conviction that MacNamarra of the corner saloon had some small appointment at his pleasure—it might be, as under musician to that spectral prince, the Mayor of New York. So he polished his old silk hat and scrupulously combed his beard and gave a staple, upward twist to his mustache, and drew on tight, yellow gloves—thus accomplishing a moth-eaten air of distinction. An hour later, he took Fiani in tow to the corner saloon; but the Master had come into his humility again over night, and held back from the threshold, pleading to be permitted to go home. Then the doctor commanded, and the Master followed in, like a reluctant

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

trained dog, slinking abashed; but the doctor carried himself boldly, presuming upon an acquaintance effected just before the voting was done—the voting of mysterious import and outcome. Alderman MacNamarra was found leaning over the bar, in glittering idleness, talking to a truckman and a street sweeper who busied themselves at the free lunch counter, where ham sandwiches and baked beans and potato salad were set out, and there was a single fork, which the truckman and the sweeper used amicably by turns. “W’at’ll ut be, boys?” said MacNamarra, leisurely, having sauntered the length of the bar.

“No, n-o!” the doctor stammered. “Eet—eet ees not a dreenk—no, no, not that. Meester MacNamarra,” waiving a hand toward Fiani, who salaamed and blushed and began to sweat through very bashfulness, “eet is a frien’ to me. Hem! I eenter-dooce Meester Fiani. I am now ask heem to play. Fine player—ver’ fine. When he have play then weel I speak what—what eet ees een my min’.” The doctor tapped his corrugated forehead illuminatively; and continued: “Ver’ fine museek—Oriental museek.



## THE GREATEST PLAYER

Ver' fine! Meester Fiani he play eet ver' good—ho, ver', ver' good; better than all Syrian people—not onlee een Washin'ton Street—no; better than the whole Syrian people een all—all the worl'! Meester Fiani he have—he ees an arteest. You have know when he play. Maybee there ees some a-p-pointment for heem. Eet make good the relation-sheep between the Syrians and the great American people. Eet may be there ees one—who knows?—eet may be. When the Mayor—excellent preence!—have eat each day, maybe he like to have hear Meester Fiani play. I speak more when he have play.” Again the doctor waived his hand toward Fiani, and said to him in Arabic: “Now, O Nageeb, display your talent given of God.”

Fiani fitted the butt of his violin under his chin and sat down under a picture of the shattered battleship *Maine* and was at once composed. The doctor withdrew into obscurity, like a showman, his introduction said.

MacNamarra, restraining his guffaws only that there might be greater cause for them, stared stolidly; and the sweeper and the

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

truckman, scenting a game, abandoned the lunch counter.

"I am now play for you," said Fiani, proudly, looking up; then smiling like a child: "I am not play 'Hot Town.' American like 'Hot Town.' No, I am not play eet." He crossed his legs and hunched his shoulders, and let his head sink over the body of the violin. The look that made men call him the dreamer settled on his face. "I am play of Love—eet ees call 'Lali,' " he said.

"Ah! I mus' ex-plain," said the doctor, quickly stepping forward, and, with ostentation, slapping his hand with his yellow gloves; and his eyes were snapping with the pleasure he found in imparting something of curious interest to these knowing people. "Ah, yes! Thees museek, what he now play. M-m-m-m! Eet was made by a preence een Arabia who was blin'—yes, made for nine hun'red year! An' eet go een one man's ear an' een the ear of hees son, an' hees son an' hees an' hees—many, many men—ho, many! An' now Meester Fiani he play eet. What you theenk?" The doctor looked around upon the company, exhibiting himself the astonishment he was persuaded

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

must be in them; and went on: "Thees preence he love one ladyee. He, beau-utiful she was! There have been no ladyee so beautiful. An' she love heem not—no, not at all. How sad! Then he made thees museek an' go mad, an' die mad—yes, yes—die mad of love! What you theenk?" Again the doctor paused for effect; and Fiani ran his bow impatiently over the strings.

"Begob," said MacNamarra, "I t'ink eet's a tin roof!" He set out brimming glasses for the truckman and the sweeper, who gleefully advanced to drink.

"Ha!" the doctor exclaimed, doubtfully.

"I am now play," Fiani said, solemnly; and he closed his eyes and began to play.

The "Song of Love to Lali" is full of the notes that cannot be written—of swift touches and light, fleeting pressure in awkward places; of hair's-breadth differences, of long-drawn notes, like the sinking of a man's heart, even the heart of a strong man, of tremulous, wailing bow lengths and half-heard quavers. Now, there is a certain meaning in all—chaotic emotion: boast and plaint and beseeching, and deepest melancholy, and the

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

conviction of hopelessness and crazed despair, and groan and gasp and the sigh of death; but the meaning is for such hearts as the hearts of the people of the blind prince who made the song and died mad of love—such as are born in the land; nor is the song to be understood by any other, nor by such as have not loved as he loved; nor can any man interpret it to a stranger, even as the masters of music say. To such as play it, it is as a shaded well, and to such as hear and know, it is as ointment to a festered sore; but to such as hear and cannot understand, it is as the slow turning of a wheel upon a dry axle—even, it may be, as a red mantle and the flare of trumpets to a nervous bull, and some——

The bamboo door was softly swung open, and Tommy Dugan, late from Ireland, peeped in. "Hi!" he screamed, turning out to beckon. "Fellers! Hi-i! Mac-Namarra's killin' pigs!"

Alderman MacNamarra of the elect of Tammany Hall, laughed. Mrs. Halloran, of the tenement across the road, said, afterward, that she "t'ought a sody-wather machane had bust—begob," but the sweeper and the truck-

## THE GREATEST PLAYER

man, who had had a part in that great noise, held with MacNamarra when he said that he had but laughed; and, in point of fact, there was nothing more—save the clash of glass; for the alderman's corpulent body fell limp against the bar, and rolled back against the gilded, mirrored sideboard, tumbling glasses and goblets into a litter and heap of shivered bits on the floor. Nor could he save himself, for he was breathless; and dared not let go his sides for the ache in them; and he collapsed behind the bar, where he lay, shaking like a mould of jelly and cackling apoplectically, until the sweeper and the truckman, themselves screeching, staggering, dragged him out in haste and slushed a pail of water over his blue face. Then he went home to bed, and had Mrs. MacNamarra call a physician and priest; and to this day you cannot speak with impunity of the Mayor's under musician to Alderman MacNamarra, for the alderman is apoplectic and afraid to die.

That night, when the last die had been thrown and the last coffee drinker had gone, and the shop was quiet, Fiani came out of



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

the darkness of his room, bringing the violin with him. The doctor was waiting in the little back room, and had the gas turned low. Fiani crept in, shamefaced, and sat down; his eyes were shot with blood, and the lids sagged, as though from long weeping. For long was no word spoken; but these two sat together in that silent, mysterious interchange of sympathy. Then came the time when Fiani rose and drew himself up; saying with a proud face and a slap of his hand upon the table: "Oh, doctaire, truest friend of mine—still am I a grea-at player!" His courage broke again, and he flung himself over the table, one arm thrown over the violin, and his head on the other; and the noise of his weeping was very great. "La, la, la!" the doctor crooned, and he leaned over the master and stroked his bushy hair, still crooning, "La, la, la-a-a!" until the shoulders heaved less. Then he went out, sad at heart. When he came to the outer door he stopped and made as though to return; but he heard the violin wail like a sick child, and went his way with a brighter face, leaving the Master to himself, to play again the "Song of Love to Lali."



FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM



## FOR THE HAND OF HALLEEM.



ASHINGTON Street had not yielded to the music of the band ; the ears of Syrians are racked by brass and reed in the muscular mouths of men who fix their understanding upon strange, black signs — glaring with their eyes at the printed page — and hold their hearts in the leash. It is contained in the first writing of Khalil Khayat, the editor, whom all men honor, that noise is born of the servitor Intellect, but music is child of the Wandering Soul ; and Khalil Khayat, as men know, speaks with authority concerning the things of the hidden heart of man. The relief of space and breeze and evening shadow, the repose of sprawling, and low, easy chatter — the long full breath of the day's end — had drawn the swarthy people to Battery Park ; the band disturbed the solemn night, as a trivial word a funeral — obscuring the distant, long-drawn whistles in which, as Nageeb Fiani says, there is more music for some ears ; and drowning the twitter and rustle in the trees, and the restful swish

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

of the waves breaking against the sea-wall. Battery Place and Whitehall, from the old to the urchins thereof, had come, frankly eager to hear the band. Rag-time and sentimental ballads—itching soles and a fleeting thought of love—move the native young of the tenements to double shuffles and tears, fast follow as they may; and there is no resisting the impulses if the hearts beat true. So Battery Place and Whitehall made love and skylarked near the bandstand; and Washington Street mooned afar off in the outlying shadows.

The roguish influence of Love in hiding shifted young Alois Awad, Ameer of the seventh generation, and Haleem, Khouri's sloe-eyed daughter, to the solitude of the edge of the crowd; and Alois, having glutted his eyes with the crimson and gray and gold of the train of the sun, turned, as with the courage of impulse, and whispered, desperately, the disquieting words: "What did Antar say of Abla, his beloved, the daughter of Malik, when his heart was sore?" he asked; and he thought she must surely hear the complainings of his heart.

"To his beloved?" She lingered over the last word.

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

"To the beloved of his heart," he answered, solemn as an earnest child.

"It is known to you, O Alois," she said with a quick, trustful smile. "Therefore, how shall my ignorance fret me? I—I—think all things are known to you," she went on softly. "All things written, anyway; for Khalil Khayat has taught you."

Haleem bent her head; and the breeze, verily as though won to the sport of Love, fluttered a tress of black hair out of place to hide the arch light in her eyes.

"This, Antar said, " Alois faltered, pushing his tarboosh up from his hot, wet brow. "This, he——"

Alois's throat was suddenly parched stiff; nor could he form one more word.

"Are the words hard to recall?"

"No-o; the words are well known to me."

Haleem brushed back the fluttering tress, and the sight of her little hand and the bloom on her cheeks gave Alois the swift confidence of infatuation. He pointed to the flaring sky over the Jersey shore. "These," he went on, "are the words of Antar, spoken of his beloved: 'The sun as it sets turns toward her and says, "Darkness obscures the land,

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

do thou arise in my absence." The brilliant moon calls out to her, "Come forth, for thy face is like me, when I am at the full and in all my glory." The tamarisk trees complain of her in the morn and in the eve, and say, "Away, thou waning beauty, thou form of the laurel!" She turns away abashed, and throws aside her veil, and the roses are scattered from her soft fresh cheeks . . . Graceful in every limb; slender her waist; love beaming are her glances; waving is her form . . . . The lustre of day sparkles from her forehead, and by the dark shades of her curling ringlets night itself is driven away. . . . Will fortune ever, O daughter of Malik, ever bless me with thy embrace? That would cure my heart of the sorrows of love!"

The voice of young Alois had risen from husky stuttering to the cadence of rapture; thus, always, the poetry of love moved him. The words were Antar's, spoken, in times long past, on a sandy waste, far, far away from where the elevated engine snorted over the long, smutty curve to the South Ferry terminal: but the vibrant anguish and the pleading of the last cry, the eternal passion,



## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

were of the pregnant moment, young Alois's. They rang true in the ears of Haleem ; and her heart answered, leaping, yet afraid, as a cub lion, captive born, might sniff and whine with its first breath of the jungle. Ah, she was a daughter of the Land, was little Haleem ! It was the first bold word of love she had heard ; and it was as though, now, suddenly, she had come to the crest of a hill, and a fair, broad land, a land of gardens and rivers and shady places—*her* land, the very riches of her womanhood—was spread at her feet, with a sure path to tread, and a golden vista, leading whither the sun was rising, all rosy. So her heart throbbed, and there was a new, strange pain in it : and she wrung her little hands cruelly—though Alois would have given a year for a kiss of the flushing finger tips—and she turned her brown eyes to the harbor, where there was nothing to delight in them—though Alois could have wandered life-long in their depths. For, indeed, she was very much afraid.

“Antar,” Alois stammered, perceiving, and ready to weep for regret that he had disquieted her, “he—he—was a bold man. Shame to him, if she suffered !”

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

"He loved her very much."

"Ho!" Alois exclaimed. "His love was very great! Did he not carry her off from the tents of her people, even against their spears?"

"Had he so great courage?" Haleem's breath came fast again; she stared, thus panting, at the unwieldy Annex Ferry and its luminous track of foam.

"Ah," Alois sighed, "there is a gentler way, and——"

"Haleem! Little daughter!" Salim Khouri, to whom fat came with prosperity, had waddled within hearing distance; and his was the asthmatic call. He came up puffing, but smiling a broad, indulgent smile. "Little Star," he said in the dialect, taking one of Haleem's thick braids in his chubby hand to fondle it, "now, ain't she a Little Star, Alois? Ha-a-a-a!" His eyes twinkled with affection for her. He moved his arm to the bench-rail at her back; and she sank against his comfortable breast, and, from this safe, familiar place, flashed an inscrutable smile to Alois, that strangely gave him courage. "She no star," Khouri went on in broken English. "She 'lectreek light. Ho, ho! That's w'at."

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

“Little Star—Little Star,” Alois said in the classic Arabic. “That is better—Little Star!” “’Lectreek light,” Haleem pouted. “My father he say ’lectreek light.”

Now Alois reproached himself for having blurted out his passion in the ear of his helpless well-beloved after the rough Western fashion—taking advantage of the liberty of the land, forgetful of the gentler, solemn way of his people; and so shamed was he in his own sight that, soon, he could bear to sit no longer with Haleem and her father, but craved to be where, in solitude, he could vent the impulse of his heart. So he said a flushing, shamefaced good-night and went away; and, wandering without aim, he came to the place where the fire-boat lay purring in her dock. This was a quiet place, shaded by the Aquarium from the noise of the band. He sat down where there was a view of the darkening harbor—the shadows had long hidden Staten Island, and were then closing round the Statue of Liberty—and, as he thought dreamily of his own beloved, the words of Antar, spoken in ecstasy, hurried, crowding, through his thoughts, weaving themselves with them, for they had been in his mind

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

many days: “‘Were I to say thy face is like the full moon of heaven, where in that full moon is the eye of the antelope? Were I to say thy shape is like the branch of the erak tree, O, thou shamest it in the grace of thy form! In thy forehead is my guide to truth; and in the night of thy tresses I wander astray. Thy teeth resemble stringed jewels; but how can I liken them to lifeless pearls? Thy bosom is created as an enchantment—oh, may God protect it ever in that perfection!’” Now, the last prayer possessed him utterly. Again, and yet again, he said the words; and the high cry, welling from his heart, made his soul to tingle. His eyes were suffused with tears; he looked up, and it was as though a holy light, falling through wide, glowing gates, threw all things near into shadow. and when the heaving, slimy water at his feet took form again, he was not so sad as he had been.

“O, may God protect it ever in that perfection!” he sighed. “Little Star!”

Elsewhere in that crowded, dusky Park, Jimmy Brady was looking, sharp-eyed, for his Li'l' Peach. Affecting a loud merriment to deceive his heart into quieter beating, he

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

pried through the crowd around the bandstand, searched the benches near the Barge Office, threaded his way through the moving, chattering throng on the broad promenade near the sea-wall, and traversed swiftly the quiet interior walks. Though tempted by the invitation in many a sweet, bright eye, he suspended his quest only to cuff a bullying urchin and caress the dirtier bullied one; and then he hesitated long enough to catch and cuff the bully again for making the first cuffing so obviously a duty. Thus, while Alois Awad gazed out over the darkened harbor, young Jimmy Brady—in the pride of his job at Swartz & Rattery's, in the glory of his white duck trousers and rolled-gold jewelry and natty new red tie, in the hope of his merry, sanguine temperament—searched persistently for Haleem the sloe-eyed, his Li'l' Peach, to tell her that he loved her. This was Jimmy of the snapping eye and gentle heart and broad shoulders and ready tears and quick right fist and laughing rejoinder and springy step and bull-dog purpose and strengthening pull on the alderman of the ward and vocabulary of five hundred words. Lord, he had words enough! It is



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

the kiss and the hug—the heart—when it comes to love. The girls of the tenements would be better off if their steadies were all like him; for liker him, liker the Man. I know him—I know them all; and that which I write is true.

“Ho! Meester Brady. Good evenin’, sair,” said Khouri the merchant, when Jimmy came, beaming, to where he sat with Haleem; and the Little Star looked up shyly and nestled closer to her father’s breast, that she might conceal the confusion that strangely overcame her, always, when Jimmy Brady came suddenly into view.

“Wake ’er up! Say, wake ’er up,” Jimmy jerked out; and then he burst into a loud laugh. “Say, she’s in a trance.”

“She ees seek—no,” Khouri answered in concern, scratching his head.

“Aw, I’m on’y stringin’ y’u,” Jimmy said quickly. “Say, w’ere d’ y’u buy yer dope? Ain’t y’u on?” He looked at the old man in sly amusement, which Haleem’s light titter fired into a laugh; then he caught Haleem by the arm and drew her, insistently, gently, to her feet, and held her there. “Aw, come on,” he went on; and the wheedling



## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

tone was tinged with a certain masterfulness that sounded sweet in Haleem's ears and drew a swift, confident glance to his face.

"It's the time we walk. Ain't that right?"

"Meester Brady—yes," she answered softly.

"I go weeth you."

"Ho!" Khouri exclaimed, looking off down the walk. "My frien', Meester Khayat, he come. I see heem. He have somethin' to say. Ver-ee important. Eet have to do weeth the Sultan of Turkey. I see eet een hees face, eet ees so—so—long, so ver-ee long. Ho, ho! Take her weeth you, Meester Brady. Take her; sure, eet ees the Land of Liberty!"

Young Jimmy, in the silence of deepest suspense, led his Li'l' Peach to a deserted bench, over which a kindly spreading bush cast a seclusive shadow; and there they sat down, having spoken not one single word on the way. Haleem gave him many an observant side-glance in the meek, covert way her people know; and now, as his lithe strength and bold, eager face impressed her young heart anew, it flashed over her, ecstatically, that this was Antar, born again, and she, Abba, his beloved, whom he had carried off

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

in the night, triumphantly, even against the spears of his enemies ; and she closed her eyes, and wished that the green bench and the flag-stones and the salty breeze and the swinging, glaring arc-lamp and all the chatter might be changed, magically, as of old, into a swift, coursing steed and the sands of the desert and the free, hot breath of the night and a million twinkling stars and the cries of pursuing enemies. As for Jimmy, he wondered at his fading courage, and laughing doubtfully in his sleeve, thought of the young light-weight he had seen in the squared circle at the Eagle Athletic Club the night before, overmatched, up against it for fair—but game, game to the finish !

“ Meester Brady,” Haleem said at last, poking fun at him in a sly way, “ you have say we walk. You forget. Eet ees fun-ee.”

“ Eh ! ” Jimmy ejaculated ; then staring abstraction took hold of him again.

The distant band struck up a swinging music-hall song—about the Only Girl—that then ran riot in men’s ears. The music and the voices of the people, singing, came, mellowed and undulant, through the space between.

“ Y’u’re it ! ” Jimmy burst out explosively ;

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

he turned to her, but stopped dead, shivering.

"It? W'at ees—eet?" she asked, pursing her lips.

"Her! Y'u're her! Lord, y'u're slow!" Jimmy's voice would have savored of disgust had it not been saturated with a deeper emotion.

"Hair?"

"The On'y One—me Honey." Jimmy had the anxious face of a man on trial, when the foreman of the jury stands up, solemnly, and the courtroom is hushed.

"Ah," she sighed, shaking her head, "I do not know eet."

"Can't y'u hear 'em sing?" he plainted.

"Ain't y'u got no ears? Y'u're it, I tell y'u Y'u're—y'u're—her."

The song came out of the distance again, blurred by the wind, which swept it from side to side.

"Hear it!" said Jimmy, raising his hand. Haleem prettily cocked her ear, and listened. The heart of Jimmy was going like a piston-rod; and he was gulping to keep his throat moist and fit.

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

“Just one girl, only just one girl ;  
There are others, I know, but they’re not my pearl.  
Just one girl, only just one girl ;  
I’d be happy forever with just one girl.”

“Ain’t y’u on ? ” Jimmy asked in a drawn, hollow whisper. “Ain’t it penetrated yet ? ” His honest heart was near to bursting ; he hitched closer and looked down in her eyes, craving the light of love. “Y’u’re it—me honey—me sweet-thing ! ” Did he, after all, have words enough ? He went on desperately, plunging to the end. “Follo’ me ? Can’t y’u *see* ? Me honey—the on’y one—me peach ! ” There was no responsive light in Haleem’s eyes—only a wondering shadow. His passion disclosed itself slowly. The shameful, effeminate words were forced out of his throat, at last ; but he gulped long, before he would give them utterance. “I love y’u,” he cried tremulously, stretching his arms out. “Hell ! I *love* y’u ! ” Then he took her hand, and waited for a sign ; and he was white and groggy, and he knew it. Haleem put her handkerchief to her eyes, and cried quietly ; but she left her little hand lying inclosed in Jimmy Brady’s great, thrilling palms.

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

“ Drop it ! Stop it ! ” Jimmy exclaimed, impulsively, his own lips twitching ; for he thought he had his sign. “ Don’t y’u cry any more, li’l’ girl. I ain’t got no kick comin’. I take me punishment like a man. Look at me. Cast yer orb on me face.” He turned a brave face up to her ; but she would not look, and had she looked, she would have seen tears in his eyes—but not tears of pity for himself ; then, he was regretting only her distress. “ It’s all right,” he went on doggedly. “ Don’t cry. I ain’t goin’ t’ say any more. I’m done, I tell y’u. Y’u’ll git a better man ’n me. It’s all right. There ain’t no kick comin’ here—honest, there ain’t. Stop it ! ” he cried, in agony. “ Y’u’re breakin’ me heart. I didn’t mean t’ make y’u cry. I’m takin’ me punishment all right.” He pulled her hand away from her eyes ; and through her tears she smiled at him. “ That’s all right, li’l’ girl,” he crooned. “ Y’u won’t be bothered wit’ me any more. I’m hurt,” he moaned, “ oh, I’m hurt awful ; but it’s all right. Y’u’ll git a better man. Come on home now, li’l’ girl. Don’t be afraid. I won’t hurt y’u. I know w’en I’m licked.”

He left her at the door of her father’s house ;



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

and she watched him swing down Rector Street to West, whistling bravely as he went ; and she went up stairs, very solemn, and she asked her heart many times, that night, whether she was sad or happy, but her heart was silent.

“ Oh,” she sobbed to her pillow, “ why do I not know whom I love ? Ah, it is so sad ! ” Now, when, on the next morning, Salim Khouri the merchant, portentously solemn, sat himself down in his great chair, waiting for his narghile to be made ready—for it was Sunday—and told her, while she filled the bowl and blew the charcoal into a glow and handed him the long tube, that Khalil Khayat had made offer for her hand for young Alois Awad, Ameer of the seventh generation, the Light of his Eyes, Haleem knew whom she loved. Then, indeed, she knew that she loved Jimmy Brady ; and she thought there was no man to compare with him in strength and beauty and courage ; but she said, blushing, that she would have her answer ready when Khalil Khayat should call in the evening, and went out with a numb heart to tell the beloved of her heart, that indeed, he must love her no more ; for she



## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

was a dutiful daughter. But why should she tell Jimmy Brady this? Ah, for the touch of his hand again! What was the courage of the new Antar? She would risk herself in the depths of his eyes! What would he venture? Her purpose weakened; she hesitated; she pressed on. Ha, she thought, clinching her little fists, she would dare him to try to carry her off! She pulled her blouse into a snug fit about her little waist, and pressed the massive silver comb into place in her wilful hair, and touched the ribbon at her throat—pressing on, all the while, to Battery Park. Little Innocence! In what peril then was the joy of Alois Awad, the Ameer?

“But my father he say, ‘Eet ees the Country of Liberty,’” she thought. “Eef I marry queek, he say, ‘O, Leetle Star, w’y you not tell ol’ father? Leetle Star—naughty Leetle Star. You marry? Shame—not tell ol’ father!’ Then I cry—I mus’ cry, I feel so bad—an’ he say, ‘Sh-h, Leetle Star! You happy?’ An’ I say, ‘Yes, I lofe heem.’ An’ he say, ‘Come, I hug you. He good man,’ he say. ‘I know heem. Come, I hug you.’ An’ he hug me, an’ he—he—anger no more.” She paused. “I tell w’at other man lofe me? No.;

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

he weel keel heem. I tell—no. Eet ees bes'—not." Then she determined, with a toss of her head: "I marry—no—nobody!"

In the evening of that day, Khalil Khayat sat with Alois Awad, the Light of his Eyes, in the back room of the coffee-house of Nageeb Fiani, which, as men know, is on Washington Street, not far up from Battery Place, and may there be found any day. They were waiting for the time to come when Khalil Khayat should go to the house of Salim Khouri the merchant, to hear the answer of Haleem, his daughter; and they were smoking, heavily, silently, each busy with fantastic dreams. The old man was listening, in fancy, to the prattle of children, feeling their soft hands in his gray hair, their soft lips against his cheek—voices and hands and lips not of children of his blood, but of the blood of the Light of his Eyes; and his face reflected his capering thoughts. Looking into the depths of the smoke cloud—here, ever, was the charm of the narghile—he saw himself a shadowy old man in a shadowy great chair set in a shadowy corner, telling dream tales, that now trooped from the nowhere into misty view, to little children of

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

shadowy, solemn feature upon his knee. Now, the dream chased the old, sad expectation of lonely senile age out of thought, and suffused his dark, melancholy face with the light of sudden hope; so that, child-like himself, he chuckled his joy, when the dream leaped out of bounds. But Alois Awad trembled in his chair, and drew swift sighs, and sought distraction in the jumbled pattern of the wall-paper and the voices in the outer room, and consumed a hundred matches to keep his cigarettes alight, and was vacant and flushed by turns, nor found relief in anything. Two dreams fought for place in his mind; and he would harbor neither, the one for that he would not dread it, the other for that he dared not entertain it.

"Thy house is to be mine, as though thou wert my son?" Khalil Khayat asked tenderly. "Is it not so, Alois Awad? In our love for each other, was it not so agreed?"

"It is even so, as I have said many times, Khalil, my friend," Alois answered, crushing his impatience. "And the chair by the window—and the books—and—and all that we have dreamed."

"Ah! It is new happiness to hear the words

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

again. And thy children are to be to me as though thou wert my very son? ”

“ As I have said many times, Khalil ; it is even so.”

“ There is a restful certainty in repetition! I am to tell them stories of the heroes of our people. Is it not so? I am to teach them the Language Beautiful. Have I not so spoken? ”

“ How often, Khalil ! ”

“ Perchance,” Khayat pursued, in wistful speculation, “ perchance there will be a Poet among them. Who knows? ” he continued solemnly. “ It may be that the son of your loins, the child of my teaching, shall some day—some day——”

“ Ah, it is a dream, Khalil,” Alois cried, sweeping his hand over his eyes.

“ But the Language needs a Poet! The Temple is crumbling! Where——”

“ Dream no more, Khalil ! ”

Khayat shrugged his shoulders. “ It is a large dream, Alois,” he said composedly.

“ But let us delight ourselves in it.”

Alois looked up at the dingy ceiling, and sighed soulfully. “ It may be,” he whispered, “ that my happiness shall fail.” Then he

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

clasped his hands, and raised them, and cried passionately: “ ‘Will fortune ever, O daughter of Malik, ever bless me with thy embrace?’ ”

The old one looked at the young one quizzically, saying: “The Arabs say, ‘Had the bird been good to eat, the pursuit of the hunter would not have been faint-hearted.’ ”

Alois smiled, and Khayat went on: “It is near time. I shall start now for the house of Salim Khouri for the answer—for the answer of little Haleem to the Light of my Eyes.”

Khayat sat still in his chair; for Jimmy Brady came swiftly through the outer room, crying, buoyantly: “Hello, Fiani! Lord, ain’t it hot! Ain’t old man Khayat here?”

His heartiness was infectious; all the men laughed sympathetically as he passed by. He burst into the little back room. His chest was swelling; his head was thrown back; he was drawing his breath as though all air were pure and bracing; his hat was on the side of his head—fairly over the ear, jaunty, saucy; his cigar was in the corner of his mouth and at the political angle; his eyes were flashing. He slapped Alois on the back—a resounding thwack, that made the Syrian wince.



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

"Much 'bliged," said Alois delightedly. "You welcome. Sit down. You happy, eh?" Old Khayat rose courteously and drew out a chair. "Be seated, Meester Brady," he said. "Toshi, Toshi!" he called. "One cup coffee—one more, for Meester Brady. How ees your health to-day, sair? Eet ees very warm, ees eet not?" There was a twinkle in Khayat's eyes; young Jimmy Brady was acceptable in his sight.

"Say, I'm—I'm married," Jimmy blurted, grinning radiantly. His voice was shrill and shaking; such was the measure of his happiness. "Hear me? I'm married. I got a li'l wife, an' she loves me—loves me, er she's a liar. Ha, ha!" He laughed abruptly, vacantly; then he gasped, happily, and continued, as in a burst of confidence: "It's this way, Mister Khayat—I run away wit' the girl, an' the old man ain't on yet. Now, I ain't crawlin' meself; but me nerves is all gone. I want somebody 't square it. Understand? Somebody 't square it—break it easy—let the old man down light. Understand? It's sudden, but it's all right; there won't be any tearin' done. The man I want is *you*. Understand? He knows y'u, an' w'at



## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

y'u say goes wit' him. Just break it. Follo' me? All y'u got t' do is—is—tell him. Now——”

Khayat was laughing; and Alois, now peculiarly responsive to the mood of the young lover, was smiling. Such, then, was the joy of love! Ah, that he might know it!

“You have not told me the name of the young ladee,” Khayat interrupted, sobering. “Who ees the dear ladee? Can eet be that she ees a Syrian?”

“She's a Dago, all right—the prettiest li'l' Dago y'u ever see,” Jimmy rattled, with rising emotion. “She's all right. Her—her heart, it's all right, too! She—she—*loves* me.” Jimmy stretched out his hands, and lifted up his rapt face; and continued, inspired to describe the graces of his beloved: “She loves me! Say, her eyes—my Gawd!—her li'l' hands—her hair—say, I'm foolish—touched. Are y'u on? Soft, I am—nutty! I ain't right in me head any more. It's her eyes—her li'l, hands—her——”

“Ah,” said Khayat, gently, “but you have not told me her dear name. How can I have help you, eef I——”

“Haleem Khouri's her name,” said Jimmy;

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

“ an’ she’s a beaut. Say, I’m foolish ! Her eyes is brown, an’ her hair is black—— ”

The muscles of Khalil Khayat’s face stiffened in their position ; but the light of interest in his eyes expired, and it was dull in them thereafter. His heart faltered—stopped—beat on again, with slowly lessening pain. Here a muscle in his face relaxed ; there another. Muscle after muscle weakened and gave ; soon his blue, twitching face, still upturned to Jimmy Brady, wore a shallow smile, that passed, anon, into ghastliness—soon a dull melancholy—soon a look of fixed woe and weariness. Then he sighed, and let his eyes fall to his coffee cup, where he kept them, fearing the greater pain in a sight of the face of Alois Awad. Alois’s cigarette had fallen to the table-cloth, and there he let it lie, while it fired the fabric, and smouldered foully. His shoulders had fallen in ; his head was swaying like the top of a tall tree in a great wind. He kept his eyes up—forced the very smile in them to hold its place. Then his head sunk ; his body tottered ; he would have fallen, strengthless, over the table, had he not caught the edge and stiffened his arms.

## FOR THE HAND OF HALFEM

"Hi!" Jimmy exclaimed. "Who hit y'u?" He could not understand; here was a physical effect, but who had struck the blow? "Say, y'u look like a game pug after a right hand jab on the jaw. Y'u look as if y'u was jolted fer fair. W'at—w'at's doin'?"

"Agh!" said Alois faintly. "I have smoke—too much smoke."

"Groggy and game an' comin' up t' the scratch, eh?" Jimmy laughed. "Here, drink yer water." There was silence. Jimmy turned to Khalil Khayat. "W'at's doin', I'm askin'? W'at——"

Khayat held up his lean hand imperiously. "Ox-cuse me," he said, contorting his features into a kindly smile. "I weel speak weeth Meester Awad een my own tongue."

"Cert," said Jimmy.

Khayat turned to Alois. "Well?" he said, simply; but there was a wondrous depth of tenderness in his voice.

"What is my love?" answered Alois Awad, Ameer of the seventh generation, in the purest speech of his people, and his eyes were shining and his voice was shrill and sure, as of a prophet of high calling. "Is it a thirst that cries for quenching? Rather is it

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

water freely given to a parched throat. Is it a consuming flame, to turn to ashes the joy of my beloved? Rather is it a fire kindled in a wintry place, burning brightly in the night, that she may bask in its heat, and dream of sunlit places. Is it the night, harboring the frightful shapes of darkness? Rather is it the twilight, and the slumber-song of the wilderness. Is it a tempest, to stir great waves to engulf the ship of her happiness? Rather is it a favoring breeze, to speed her into port. Is it a winged arrow, the arrow of my bow, straight-aimed in the cunning of my eye, flying swiftly, seeking out her fair breast to tear it? Oh, the cruel song of the arrow; and again, and yet again, oh, the cruel song of the arrow! Nay! Rather is it a shield for my beloved—a shield encompassing her, a shield of tried steel—my shield, defending her against the arrows of sorrow.”

“The Light of my Eyes!” Khalil Khayat murmured rapturously, tingling to his finger-tips. “The Light of my Eyes!” He looked long in the young man’s face; and he pulled his gray mustache tremulously, and drew long, deep breaths through his expanded

## FOR THE HAND OF HALEEM

nostrils, like a man lifted out of himself by the courage of a champion. "I know the meaning, Light of my Eyes!"

"W'at's this?" Jimmy demanded, dazed. "Somebody's hurt—I—I—do' know. Ain't somebody hurt?"

"I weel go weeth you," said Khayat, rising steadily. His dark face was then emotionless. He looked absently for his hat—under the table, on the hooks, on the chairs; and he flushed when he found it on his head. "Come!" he continued. "Salim Khouri, eet ees a frien'. My words they have power weeth heem. He have respect for me. He weel forgeeve. Let me but say eet ees well, and all weel be well. She weep, have you say? Little Haleem weep to go home! Let us have hurry. She weel be forgeeve, W'at I say, Khouri he weel do. Not turning to look at Alois Awad, the Light of his Eyes, Khalil Khayat went out. His old rusty hat was on the back of his head, pulled down to his ears. He was staring absently straight before him. Was it a smile on his face? Was it the shadow of pain? Was it a smile touched with regret? Men wondered as he passed along with Jimmy Brady; and they turned to look again; but they could

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

not tell whether or not it was well with  
Khalil Khayat that day.



# THE UNDER SHEPHERD



## THE UNDER SHEPHERD



AG, the lean Irish girl —she who was two years married to Mustapha il Haladad— had groped her way up the two rickety flights to the little dispensary of the Orthodox Church of the Syrians, and had gasped the fear that her baby was dying; and the Doctor—Salem Effendi, of the *Faculté de Medecine de Constantinople*—had pulled on his rusty high hat and trotted importantly out on her heels, patting her on the back, and crooning “La-a, la-a, my de-ear! We will not thees time have die—not the leetle one! Sh-h-h! La-a, la-a, la-a!”

An hour before, the young Father Nikola, a priest of the Orthodox Church, and Under Shepherd of the Sheep of Washington Street—that swarthy, sloe-eyed, simple people of incongruous dwelling places—the young Father, whose gentle tyranny endures to this day in the good it begot, had gone up from the church on the floor below to pass the time with the Doctor against the coming of

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

the wasted body of Nageeb the Intelligent, Abo-Samara's little son, who had died of lung trouble, even as his father had; for Nageeb was to be buried that day.

With the going of the Doctor the Father was left alone to the lugubrious companionship of the operating chair and a thousand little bottles of mysterious, pungent contents, and of a staring portrait of the Czar and the half of a dusty, disintegrating skeleton. The chair was tilted to an awkward angle where the floor, partaking of the general dilapidation, sagged listlessly; the bottles were arrayed in thin, disordered rows, like a lackadaisical battalion; and the eyes of the Czar searched hypnotically, in every direction, even, as Abotantos, the janitor, has said, "as the very eyes of God." Over the garish, shiftless whole a lonesome silence brooded—a silence such as when a creaking board suggests the footfall of a ghost.

The last, full-drawn whiff of the Doctor's cigarette was caught by the swift little draughts that entered viciously through many a crevice in that old, old building. The Father absently watched the fragrant cloud of smoke swirl and disperse; fancying

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

all the while that he could hear a multitude of women crying from all about, "Doctor, doctor, come quick! I—I—think me baby's dyin'. Oh, fer Gawd's sake, doctor, come—come quick!" He turned to the litter of French and Arabic medical books on the Doctor's table for pre-occupation; but, in a moment, he tossed them aside as barren of distraction, adding impatient thump and rustle to the scampering and the spitting of the excitable black cat in the society room beyond, and to the garrulous grumbling in the church below, where old Abotantos was making ready for the requiem for the soul of Abo-Samara's little son.

Abotantos stopped his sweeping and his grumbling, and tiptoed, heavily, to the foot of the stair, and stood, listening.

"Father," he shouted, screwing his gray face into a scowl, "what's all this trouble for a beggar, the brat of a beggar? A fine mass for the son of Abo-Samara! As well clothe a pauper in fine raiment and send him to a king's banquet! Agh! it is a lie before the Keeper of the Gate."

"Abotantos," the Father called back, smiling, "who was it beat the Irish boy for hit-

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

ting you with the hard snow ; but last winter, Abotanos—who was that little one ? ”

“ The Irish—*tamn, tamn, tamn !* ” Abotanos burst out. “ He had the heart of a fighter, that little Nageeb,” he continued, with an accent of gentleness, long in disuse. He added, ungraciously, in the lower voice of second thought : “ But it is a great trouble for nothing ; and I am an old man—an old, old man without any sons.”

The Father knew that the old man was leaning on his broom and wagging his head forlornly.

“ It may be,” called the Father, “ that I shall have something for you—after the service.”

“ Huh ! ” Abotanos exclaimed ; and he went back to his work in the cheerless church, and grumbled no more.

The Father was suddenly possessed by a fit of impatience. He looked at his watch, and caught his breath as he snapped it shut, for they were late with the little coffin—late on this day of untimely bitterness, when the children of other improvident women were shivering in many a loose roof room and cellar through which the raw wind coursed,



## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

triumphant, mocking. He thought impetuously, in his way: She was wailing over the brat; clinging to the pretty clay, which, as men knew, she had never prized so highly. Had she the shock of bothersome black hair untangled for——

“There won’t be many at the service,” Abotanos whined up the stair.

“There will be only a woman,” was the sharp reply; and the sweeping was soon resumed.

Thus the sight of the wailing woman was tumbled into a formless heap. The Father turned to his pocket comb and mirror for distraction. He hummed lightly as he sought for a good place to set the mirror, to make the most of the wintry light—trying it here, trying it there. He dressed and fondled his long black hair until it fell smoothly back from his fine, placid forehead to his shoulders, until there was no tangle in the curling end; and when he had bestowed every hair of his thin beard in its place, he admired himself naively, and smiled, turning his head from side to side—trying this expression, trying that, pride, compassion, pleading and all; squinting to catch the reflection. The

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

twinkle came back to his eye; he sang a snatch of a love song. Then he pulled the dusty muslin curtains aside and looked out at the brick wall and drifting snow and Halloran's red shirt swinging stiffly from a high line. It was such a day as when there is least pain in the sight of a white hearse in an impoverished neighborhood—a raw day, following kindly weather, cruel with menace, as though winter, newly free, tried his strength in sinister sport. The Father shivered and drew the skirt of his cassock tight about his legs; thinking that Nageeb the Intelligent, Abo-Samara's little son, was a lucky little Syrian to have been killed by the climate so soon . . . and continued in melancholy meditation, into which there flashed, intermittently, the established promise of surcease of sorrow for his people—until he was interrupted by a voice, saying softly:

“May the day be long in happiness for you, O Father!”

The wheezy complainings of the stair had fallen on the ears of the dreamer unheard; there had been no sound of shambling footsteps in the hall, no timid tapping at the

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

door—none of the familiar warnings, slow and stealthful, of one coming to the dispensary ; whereabouts, as in all the Quarter, the atmosphere is thick with suspicion and envy, and eavesdroppers lurk of nature in dusky corners. The Father rose in fright, catching his breath, and turned swiftly to the door, to find, standing there, a hesitant, shamefaced woman of the lower class, round and squat, with a spreading pink shawl over her head, caught together at the nostrils, so that there were disclosed of her features but her long-lashed, dull brown eyes, a patch of forehead and a ragged fringe of blue-black hair. She had one thick, bangled hand pressed against her heart, and she was panting hard, as though from exhaustion—it may be through fear of shame ; for this was the young wife of Sadahala the Merchant, who was deep in love with Atta the Wrestler, and she had wondered concerning her reputation through the solemn hours of many a night, flushing hope, flushing fear, crooning always to her heart to soothe it: “ Oh, heart, poor thing, will you please not love him any more ! Sh—h—h ! The gossips have not yet found you out. Oh, poor heart, won’t you

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

please let the love go? Sometime it will hurt you no more. Little heart, dear little one, forget the beauty of his strength—' so crooning to it, pitying it, but strong against it, even as her people are strong.

The Father drew himself to his full height and threw back his head; then he looked upon her fixedly, and stepped back, drawing the skirt of his cassock about him.

"Ah," he said, with a glance askance and a disgustful twitch of the lips, as one who passes, shrinking, some contamination, "it is the wife of Sadahala!" There was the quiver of scorn in the low, soft-spoken words; under their icy deliberation the woman cowered and shivered—like a man, solitary in some black, waste place, struck by a blast of sleet.

Now, the scorn and the curl of the lip had been planned; there had been suspicion in the Father's mind. The woman fell into the trap.

"The people lie," she faltered, weakly defiant. "It's as easy to lie as to breathe." Then she sobbed, like a child in a passion of denial, her voice rising: "It is all lies—there is no shame—I have been true to my hus-

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

band!" There was a plaintive note of protest in her voice, as she continued, tremulously: "Father, don't you believe what they say. It is lies—all great, big black lies. Father, give me your hand to kiss."

The Father looked out of the window, inexorably; and the woman, suddenly listless through despair, let her shawl sink to her shoulders and swung across the little room—her heavy under lip hanging, her eyes showing cognizance of nothing near—and sat down. She stared at the priest's back, bitterly hopeless; then her head sunk over her knees, she put her hands to her face, and swayed from side to side, sobbing dryly. "Tell me, won't you please, Father," she complained—she had risen and touched him timidly on the shoulder, and had stepped back and hung her head, conscious that she had presumed too far—"what do the people say about the wife of Sadahala? Aie! Who is weaker than I? Yet I have withstood him . . . He says he knows I love him . . . He shows me his strength, and it is very great. . . He won't go away. . ."

"O-ho!" the Father exclaimed, triumphantly. "Then it is so. You love him."



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

“What do the people——”

“They call you by a good name,” the Father said. “Their eyes are not so sharp as mine.” He added significantly: “*I have seen what I have seen.*” He wanted to make a mystery of his cunning; in point of fact, he had chanced on a meeting—but three words, a glance and a protest—in Battery Park, and had been quick to suspect. “As for your husband, did he not say to me yesterday, ‘I am not sorry that I took the beggar to wife. She is as sunshine to my dwelling place.’”

“God is loving and merciful,” she said, softly; “and you are a sly one, O Father! Now I have come to you—how is it written?—as to the shadow of a great rock. You won’t kill the man. Dare a priest shed blood? Nobody will kill him, then. They shan’t kill him,” she burst out vehemently. Then suddenly quiet: “I am going to be true to my husband, who says”—she, too, looked out of the window, seeing nothing of the brick wall and Halloran’s red shirt, but through and beyond, even to that distance where strange tableaux take changing shape in the gray mists; as it is written, what is in the heart of a woman that will she dream—



## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

“true to my husband, who says that I am as sunshine to his dwelling place.” She stared on, her hands clasped in her lap.

The Father could hardly contain himself to hear the end of this. He advanced impetuously, his severity melting, vanishing, and let the wife of Sadahala kiss his hand—a fine, slim, brown hand, which he was careful to rub at once, but abstractedly, with a little handkerchief; for the kisses of the woman were fervent, clinging, hot out of the fullness of a new hope. Then he paced the room, all things trembling to his tread; and he cried, in the purer Arabic of passion:

“Ho! Now shall this fleshly fellow be overwhelmed. Bone and muscle and the fury of strength totter and fail before the invisible might of the authority of the Church of the All-Powerful; yea, even as the tree of a hundred years, a tree thick and of stubborn growth, is uprooted and cast lengthwise by the wind which no man sees. I, Nikola Diebs, priest of the Orthodox Church, I—I am the instrument of God to confuse him. And shall he know by whom confusion comes? Ho!” The Father’s eyes were flashing, and his lips had the curl of sure defi-

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

ance; his voice was raised to the pitch and sing-song of high zeal; now and again he flung his arms out. "The woman has come to me. Ho! even as to the shadow of a great rock. By the flame of noon, and by the thirsty heat; and by the evening wind, and by the dusk as it creeps out of the east, and by the dew that cools the weary feet, she shall rest from the sun; and its rays shall no more scorch her." Now the Father swiftly planned. . . . He was incoherent; then silent . . . He had scented a lurking wolf; he was in a flame of passion against it. He was to thrust—to thrust for heart's blood, that one of the fold might be kept safe.

The wife of Sadahala sat in her chair, moaning, muttering; for now she knew that she was to be separated forever from her heart's desire—a deliverance prayed for; but, in its coming, resistless, terrible, merciless as a falling rock. Her broken words were spoken to her heart; and they were such as these—reiterated, as with swift, persistent hands men put forth their strength to stem a rising torrent: "Oh, heart, oh, heart—hush! Let him go—let him go. Oh, heart, he will go

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

away. Hush ! The love is a deadly sin. Poor heart, it is not good that you should see him again. Don't cry so hard. The pain will go away, poor heart—poor little heart. Hush !”

. . . Now she writhed where she sat ; now her body swayed ; now her head sunk to her very knees ; now she covered her face with her hands ; now she pressed her full, heaving bosom, as though to crush it into quiet . . . and she wondered, dully, how the Father would pluck out her offending eye, and concerning the pain of the last wrench ; and there came, through all, some vague fear of the wrath of her lover, touched with very exultation in his strength for wrath ; and at such times she cried to herself most vehemently : “ Oh, heart, do not love him any more—leave me alone, heart—let me be true ! ”

“ Can this Atta read ? ” the Father asked, sharply, pausing in his walk.

“ If the words be such as children use,” the wife of Sadahala answered in a slow, quiet voice.

“ Sit at the table and set down the words of my mouth.” The woman glided over and awkwardly made ready. The Father paced

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

the floor again, dictating. "To Yusef Atta, the Wrestler—rather, whom men call the Wrestler—let it be written so. To Yusef Atta, whom men call the Wrestler, from the wife of Salim Sadahala, a maid-servant of God, sent by the hand of One Trustworthy." The woman wrote the words; the pen was slow and halting, for she was ignorant. The Father continued: "Now it is commanded that an end shall come to the sinful persecution—that an end shall come forthwith to the——"

"It is too long a word—forthwith," the woman faltered, faintly. "He won't know the meaning."

"Ho! Is it so?"

"And what good is the word? Let us leave it out of the letter."

"Ah," said the Father, meditatively, "it is so. He would not understand. Let 'at once' be substituted for 'forthwith'; that the letter may read thus: 'That an end must at once come.'"

The woman's face quivered; but she bent resolutely over the page.

The Father went to the door and called down the stair:

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

“Abotanhos ! Abotanhos !”

The wife of Sadahala let the pen fall with a clatter, and she gasped and turned.

“Abotanhos !” The Father strode into the hall, and shouted sharply : “Abotanhos ! Come !”

The woman darted to the priest ; livid, panting ; she caught his arm and clung to it, as though, in a frenzy, to restrain him from some blind misstep in a place where death lurked all about his careless feet.

“Would you send this letter by your own servant !” she cried, the throb of fright, the ring of warning in her shrill, strained voice.

“What’s this !” he exclaimed, trying to shake her off.

“Would you let this devil know who it was commanded me not to love, would——”

“Stop ! I will let this wolf know there is a shepherd awake at the gate of the fold.”

The Father thrust her from him, impatient with her violence ; he strode to the edge of the stair, and shouted angrily : “Abotanhos ! Open your old ears !” He was fairly past patience.

“Now, by the triple Golden Throne,” the woman screamed, waving her arms, “this Atta shall not feel your hand in this thing ;

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

for a knife-thrust in the dark is his way, and a stroke, sure and deep, would be his answer." Her voice broke; she crossed her arms against her bosom, and pleaded, choking, her cry but topping the sound of the risen wind as it whistled through the court, and bullied the red shirt on the high line and flung the snow against the window panes: "O Father, jealous as the very Christ for the righteousness of His servants and like unto Him in the courage of compassion, send the letter by another way. Is not the man a great man, and is there any reason in him, or any check upon his passion? . . . For, lo! I have touched my fingers to the muscles of his arms, and his neck, and his breast, to learn if his boast were true, even as he challenged; and his strength is very great. And he has held me in his arms like a yearling child—shame overwhelms me!—and my fat is as a feather to his might. . . . Now, his strength is as the strength of seven men, and four *p'leecem'n* has he vanquished in fight; and six men has he killed in his time, as he says, and three have rotted in the tomb for that they stood in the way of his desire. Now——"



## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

Old Abotanos tottered in, out of breath, wheezing, scolding. "What is this uproar?" he gasped; and he stamped his foot and scowled. "Shame to the Priest of the Holy Church! Am I asleep? Am I deaf? Am I blind? Am I drunk? Am I dead? Is the name of Abotanos to be screeched as men cry, 'Fire! fire! fire!'" The Arabs say: A man is a dog who is—called—to heel like a—dog——"

The Father's flaring eyes brought Abotanos to a stutter, to a halt, to a full stop.

"Woman——" the priest began, waving his hand toward the table.

There was the clatter of rough footfalls on the lower stair; soon, on the first landing, the thud of a burden let down heavily.

"Hi, up there!" A hoarse voice, in English, came out of the silence below. "W'ere d'ye want this party t' go? We ain't got no time t' lose. It'll be dark w'en we reach the grave."

The Father went out to answer. "Poot eet een the church," he cried. "Eet have go there. A'right. Much 'bliged. I come queek. You are welcome. Much 'bliged." He stepped back into the dispensary. "Abo-

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

tanios," he commanded, speaking quickly, "seek you out Yusef Atta, who calls himself a wrestler. Say to him these words of mine, naming my name: There are six kinds of suicide; and fire and frost are the portion of the suicide. The first is by water, the second is by poison, the third is by the rope, the fourth is by the pistol, the fifth is by the knife, and the sixth is by loving the wife of a strong man."

"There are seven," Abotanos burst out. "And the seventh is by tempting the devil!"

"Abotanos!" This was solemnly said.

"Give me a sharp knife to take with the message!"

"Go!" This was imperiously exclaimed.

Abotanos slunk out, turning at the door, like a whipped dog, to snarl.

The Father thanked God perfunctorily, ascribing all glory to Him for a blow well struck; muttering in haste and agitation, to the confusion of his prayer with his inmost thought. "Now, O God, thanks be to Thee for—ah! my hair is in a tangle—this good work. The glory—there is dust on my skirt!—is Thine. There is no righteousness in Thy servant; nor is there—there is a volcano in

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

my head!—any strength but from Thee. Lend Thy countenance to—oh, where is my comb? Stop your noise, woman. Who shall strike a priest of God? Here is the service waiting. I must go now . . . ”

When he had scrupulously rearranged his tousled hair he descended to the church, and vested himself; ignoring the dumb, staring woman, who with his going, threw herself prone on the floor with dull horror, to await the event. The door in the twisted iron screen that divided the low, shadowy church room from the first landing, above the strength of any man, clanked shut after him; and it chanced to lock by the spring just as the street door below was blown to after the last of the undertaker's men. The mother of Nageeb the Intelligent had come alone (but I cannot bring myself to tell you why, such is my pity for her). She sat wailing in the first row of crazy wooden chairs; nor did her lamentations subside into sobs and snuffling until the Father, overswept by a gentle impulse—recent wrath and threat sunk out of thought in a well of nearer pity—had whispered a soft word in her ear and laid his hand tenderly upon her head.

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Elsewhere in the gloomy old building there was no life; save in the dispensary, where the black cat, stretched out, lay snoozing beside the oil stove, and the wife of Sadahala listened to the beating of her own heart. There was silence soon—numb, cold, dreary. The Father, in all his rich robes of office, standing in his place at the altar with the little book open at the thumb-soiled first page of the funeral service, waited for the return of Abotnios, the while staring vacantly at cross and candle and pictured saint and cobweb and strange shadow and dark recess, not knowing that the old man had forgotten his duty to the service in the gossip of the coffee table. Then, at last, he proceeded alone, making a shift with half the candles and no deacon; for it was growing late. He was not unused to the necessity; but this time he swung his censer with a deeper sigh.

Atta the Wrestler had eaten his three pounds of flesh and drunk his quart of whiskey. He was in a playful, cruel humor, on the verge of a certain sleepy petulance, which, coming upon him, invariably lost him his company. He was sprawling in a great chair near the

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

coffee house stove ; this was the only chair into which he could fit his great body, and, now, even it creaked beneath his weight. His tarboosh was awry on the back of his head ; it was hanging on his thick, wiry curls as from several pegs. His coat was loose, disclosing the hilt of a knife in the folds of his red sash ; his gaudy silken shirt was unbuttoned at the throat, exposing a muscular, hairy throat and breast. He was teasing the cat in an indolent fashion, as though not quite sure that its angry resistance was worth the trouble to see. The sport flushed his flabby face, and gave a sinister glint to his eyes. Just as Abotanos stumbled in out of the storm the cat was sent flying over the oilcloth by a blow of the wrestler's hand, into which it had dug its nails.

"Is it you at last, Yusef Atta?" Abotanos cried, scowling. "What is all this trouble you are making for me? Why can't you leave the woman to——"

"Abotanos," Atta interrupted, "shut your mouth!"

"I will not shut my mouth," Abotanos scolded, stamping his foot. "I have something to say to you from Father Nikola

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Diebs. These are the words I am commanded to say : Six are the ways in which a worthless fellow can rid good people of his company. One is by the rope, which, at best, is doubtful; the next is by poison, which is expensive and likely to get the poor druggist in trouble; the third is by the knife, which is painful; the fourth is by the pistol, which is both noisy and nasty; the fifth is by drowning, which is cheap and now highly recommended; and the sixth is by loving the wife of a strong man, which is sure."

"Is there any other word, O Abotanio?" Atta whispered, gripping the arms of the chair.

"There is no other word save mine, that drowning is a pleasant death, as I have been told, and saves the cost of a funeral."

"And Nikola Diebs said the words?"

"As I have spoken, so he spoke."

Atta had grown pale. He trembled, as of passion. Now he brushed his hand over his eyes; then snapped his teeth, like a dog in a fit. Suddenly he leaped from his chair and ran out, feeling for something in his sash as he went.



## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

*Blessed be God!*

*God is Holy. God is Holy!*

The response to the people was in the lone, quavering voice of the mother of little Nageeb. It struggled from where, bowed and shivering, she sat against the wall, her borrowed black dress and veil hiding her in the shadow; and it faded away at the foot of the stair, failing strength to rise to the room where the other woman waited. It was thin, nasal, broken, with no ring of zeal, incongruous with the spirit of the words; a wail, drawn and mournful as the howl of a lost dog. The voice of the Father, pitched high, rang sure and sweet, sounding clear above the swish and shriek of the wind that swept, eddying, over the floor and up the stair, and exhausted itself in the society room; above the clatter of the rickety windows, and the creaking signboard swinging from the sill; drowning the street noises and the hoarse cries of Bill Rattigan, the truck driver, who had run foul of the hearse and was cursing his weary horses. The vibrant tenderness of the Father's voice mellowed the frigid, clammy loneliness of the room into encompassing condolence, as a burst of spring sun-

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

shine tempers the wind; and it was as though ten candles were a hundred, and the crosses glittered with the light of very Paradise, and the faces of Son and Saints shone with love. There was no darkness any more, though the melancholy light of day faded into deeper dusk.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and—*

Atta the Wrestler flung himself furiously against the wire screen that shut him off

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

from the church. The high words of Nikola Diebs, proud priest of the Orthodox Church, spoken through his servant Abotanos, had thrown the man into the bestial fury of possession (as once before had happened, when he crushed a man to death in his arms); for he was a lover of raw flesh, and had no mind above his passion. He had opened the street door below, stealthfully, and crept in; had stood silent in the darkness of the hall, panting; had drawn his knife from his sash with an eager hand, and crept to the top of the stair, feeling his way against the wall, resting a hand on the steps to relieve the strain of his weight, pausing now and again to listen; had waited a long time at the top, hiding close to the wall; had reached his great left hand softly to the knob of the door in the wire screen, and had turned the knob and found the bolt shot; had drawn back out of sight, and tried the door again, vainly; balked, had contained his passion, through fear to vent it boldly, until his heart throbbed near to bursting, and blood flushed his eyes and sweat ran hot from crown to sole of his great body. Then he had leaped from the shelter and flung himself against the door;

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

breaking in on the Father's fervent reading with a thunderous crash.

The screen flung him back, bruised. He bit his under lip until the blood ran down his chin. Froth flecked the hair around his mouth. He poised to spring again against the door.

*—they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

The Father had turned and swept to the door. He perceived Atta poised for the spring; the light striking through the screen disclosed the wrestler's frothy lips and bloody chin and glittering eyes. The man's condition stood revealed; "and he was possessed of a devil." The Father stood stock still, close to the screen, imperiously confronting the man behind. There was silence, strained, oppressive, pregnant; the whimpering of the mother of Nageeb had ceased of deeper fright; the last echo of the scream from the dispensary had died away. The priest's hand was uplifted; a gleaming cross rose above his head, behind; shadows encompassed him. The light of seven candles struck him from

## THE UNDER SHEPHERD

behind ; his thin, white robe was illumined into the semblance of the insubstantial raiment of the Son of God pictured ascending through riven, sunlit clouds. Thus, radiant, towering, motionless, he stood, while the wrestler's throat dried out and his heart grew cold and his legs weakened and shook like crumbling pillars at the breaking point. Suddenly the Father touched the lock and swung the door wide ; and turned his back, and walked to his place at the altar, crying as he went :

*I can of mine own self do nothing ; as I hear I judge ; and my judgment is just ; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me ; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of me is true.*

Atta was crushed against the further wall, where the shadow was deepest and the space between greatest ; he was gasping, as though, by putting forth his utmost strength, he had flung off an adversary—a strong, persistent adversary, who would return again. His

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

great breast rose and fell tumultuously ; his breathing sounded like the swish-swash of a saw when the log is near in twain ; his thick lips were drawn back from his teeth, and twitching ; his dagger hand was raised, and shaking. He was like a man of craven heart waiting for the onslaught in an unchosen conflict—brought to bay. Reason returning, his muscles relaxed ; he slunk to the stair, keeping his front to the altar ; and he went out as stealthfully as he had come ; nor was he lurking at the door when the hearse moved off ; nor was he heard of in the Quarter any more after that night. And when the lower door closed after him, a mocking laugh rang out from the dispensary—a mocking woman's laugh, touched, even, with exultation.



# THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION



HEN, craftily, peering in fear of the virago of the tenement, old Khalil Khayat, the editor, peeped in, and, reassured by the solemn quiet, crept to the corner where he lay, little Billy Halloran was in rare, sore need of some comfort and courage, —such, perchance, as may be found in a hand laid on the head in tenderness, be the touch ever so swift and diffident, and in the sound of a voice speaking softly of old, far-away things. Three hours ago, *Kawkab Elhorriah* had gone to press in the old yellow building near South Street, where Salim Shofi's hard money gives life, daily, to the old teaching in new words. Even now, Nageeb the Intelligent, Abo-Samara's little son, was throwing it on the restaurant tables of Washington Street, from Rector to the Battery, crying, "*Kawkab!* News of a Mohammedan outrage in Damascus!" with all the importance of his ten years. The day's work was done, so Khayat had leisure for a kindly deed; and the plea for it, strong as a

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

voice, was in Billy's bad leg, which the tumbled coverlid disclosed—scrawny, shining white in the twilight, like a misshapen stalk of sickly cellar growth. I will write no more about the bad leg, nor shall the responsibility of the medical student ever be set forth ; for, even as Khalil Khayat has written : *There is a wide blue sky and a stagnant gutter, and the eyes of men move freely in their sockets ; and in the contemplation of the one there is a great lifting up, but in the other an unprofitable sickness of soul.* All of which, indeed, has nothing to do with how Mahaomed Yassin Shariff's knife-thrust, in Damascus, laid bare the Spirit of Revolution in Washington Street, but cries out, piteously, to be set down.

"Your mother—where ees she?" Khayat whispered fearfully.

"Jagged," Billy answered, sighing his relief.

"She—s-she ees not here?" Khayat asked.

"Naw," was the reply, in a thin, frail, weary voice. "She's chasin' de duck."

"Ah, eet ees good," Khayat said. He sat down with some assurance, and smiled.

"Ain't y'u goin' t' tell me a story, Mister Khayat?" Billy wailed from the shadow.

Now, Khayat had the caress and the story to

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

stop the whimpering ; and no man knew better than this old one the worth of a touch and a tale in the twilight. When the evening wind rose, cool and fresh from the harbor, and eddied through the room and swept the heated, fetid air from the corner, as though seeking out first, eagerly, the children with whom the sun had dealt cruelly, Billy rested, listening in lassitude to the droning voice, content, forgetful. Soon his eyelids were too heavy for him ; but the story went on, in a practiced sing-song, like a lullaby, until he fell asleep, and there was no sound but the soothing, summer-night murmur, rising from the street. Then Khalil Khayat dropped the hot little hand, which he had taken up regardless of the grime ; and rose, like a thief, to steal away to the back room of the coffee-house of Nageeb Fiani, to hear what the people had to say of the writing in that day's *Kawkab Elhorriah* concerning the licentious murder of Salim Khouri's brother by Mahomed Yassin Shariff, a Mohammedan, in Damascus ; for the writing was like a seed sown with anxious care, that the harvest, to be reaped by other hands in the far-away future, might be Liberty—like one

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

seed sown hopefully from a deep bag. Billy opened his eyes; but the lids closed again, against his will, for he was very weary, and the relief of the evening was upon him. "Ain't you goin' t' come back no more t'night?" he plained.

"Have you not sleep? I seet down more weeth you," Khayat whispered; but Billy was again asleep. "I am come back soon," Khayat went on; and he moved to go, stepping softly.

"Ain't y'u — fergit — de — flow'r?" Billy asked, waking; and then he dozed off beyond light disturbance.

Ah! in his unholy eagerness for the entertainment of learning whether the seed was to shrivel or take sure root, Khayat had forgotten Billy's plant—the twisted, scrawny, pale little plant, like unto Billy himself, that then thirsted on the fire-escape, where it had been put, with groaning, by its lover, in the afternoon. With what reproaches did Khayat hurt his heart as he brought it in, and watered it and bathed its every lean, miserable leaf, and set it at the head of the cot to comfort the waking eyes! Had he been remiss in anything else? He scratched his head and puz-



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

zled his absent mind ; and, having thought long and distressfully in vain, tip-toed out, frowning, self-reproachful, for in the sight of Billy Halloran there was no plant like that weakling, and in the heart of Khalil Khayat no self-justification for leaving it long in discomfort. So the regret followed the old man half-way down the stair, and was forgotten utterly only when the old-world smell of the narghilies and the noise of 'a great voice, raised raspingly in exhortation to the shedding of blood, even the sacred blood of the Sultan, shut the little Irish boy and all the things of the tenement out of thought, at the door to the back room of Nageeb Fiani's coffee-house, where the Irish never go.

“ . . . written ; and eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth ? ” Elias Rahal was crying in a passionate undertone, in the finer Arabic of oratory. “ Even now the lamentations of Salim Khouri, whose brother has gone to the grave in blood, sound in our ears ; and so great is the noise of his weeping that men gather in the street, wondering to hear it, and the *pl'eecem'n* make their way to the place where he lies, even to the *sixt' floor* of the great dwelling-place, though they are weary

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

with much walking, and very fat and important . . . .”

Khayat halted at the door to listen—eaves-dropping innocently; verily, as men say, there was no guile in him. He sat down in the darkness of the middle room, at the door to the narrow place where Elias Rahal sat at the round table with four others; and there was a smile on his thin, dark face, like the smile of a rapt, expectant child in the darkened amphitheater when the footlights flare suddenly against the great curtain and a burst of music announces the disclosure of the spectacle. Such, indeed, was the character of his interest in the shifting passions of the people. His work for Liberty was higher than their hands could reach to help or hinder: his purpose without variableness, past their understanding, solemn, hidden within his heart, laying stone upon stone of a Temple which the hands of the children of the yet unborn should complete. This was the fanciful conception with which he cheered his life; so to talk of the people was a passing bitterness or a thrill of soul, as it chanced. What did their talk matter? He would sow, day after day. What was the loss of one small

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

seed from a deep bag? And even as he has written : *In the autumn the harvest is garnered, spite the wrath of a (single) day.* It was, indeed, all a play ; and Khayat, with his pen laid aside for the day, was like a child looking on—the emotion fading with the falling of the curtain.

“ . . . the shedding of Christian blood to continue forever?” Rahal went on with deepening passion. “ Is a murderer to be forever safe against justice because he is a Turk and a Mohammedan? Is the foot of the Sultan Abdul Hamid never to be flung from the necks of our people, but is the heel of his iron boot to tear the throats of our children’s children? Is it forever we must suffer . . . .”

The words of Rahal were lost to the listener in the street noises. The outer door was open in invitation to the evening wind; but Rahal’s staccato utterance had lifted itself clear above the outer night-clatter—above the rattle of the truck-wheels on the cobble stones and the sound of the drivers’ warning cries, above the intermittent roar of the elevated trains, and the buzz of gossip. Now, the sportive children, the gutter-snipes marched past

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

in whimsical, riotous procession, singing :

Hello, mah baby !  
Hello, mah honey !  
Hello, mah rag-time gal !  
Send me a kiss by wire,  
Honey, mah heart's on fire.  
If you refuse me,  
Then you will lose me,  
An' you'll be left alone,  
Oh, baby telephone,  
An' tell me I'm yer own !

Khayat had been absorbed in Rahal's speech, eager, like a critic, to rate the climax—the form of it, the ring of it; but there was no anger in his heart because the children were noisy. He was always jealous for the happiness of children, as Nageeb the Intelligent, Abo-Samara's little son, knew well before he died, and as all the little people of the gutters will tell you to this very day. He did not exclaim impatiently; he reached out stealthfully and pushed the door to the little back room ajar, that he might hear the better.

"Hush-h-h, Elias!" came from within.

"Hush!"

"There is one listening at the door."

There was silence—as when men strain their

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

ears to catch a warning, for their very lives' sake. Khayat was still as a statue; and his eyes were shining like the eyes of a roguish child playing at hide-and-seek. Ah, he is comparable only to a child—Khayat is! The Spirit had taken life lease of a corner in his heart!

"No; there is no one near."

"Go on, Elias. It is very fine."

"If my enemy should hear?" Rahal whined.

"There is no ear to hear—save only ours."

There was a second period of listening, which the contemptuous bubbling of a narghile disturbed.

"Go on, Elias. Our hearts are in our mouths, where your words have sent them leaping. Are we to choke to death?"

"Go on, Elias. Who is to shed the Sultan's blood, did you say?"

Now, they speak with candor of dark designs only in the dark, these expatriated Syrians of lower Washington Street; for every man sees an enemy in his friend, and, though words may be discreetly chosen and softly spoken, no man, as it is written, can draw a blind over his eyes. So when one spoke of

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

the Sultan's blood, another, as though afraid to betray the pallor and agitation of fear, turned the gas to a pin's-head flame. Shadows—seclusion; the time was ripe for blackest conspiracy. For, perchance, even as children of persuasive imagination, with the swaggering courage of garret-clothes and garret-guns, when the Dusk, deepening, veils the face of the garden with gray Mystery, enchanting the familiar clump of lilacs into a rocky rendezvous for bandits and all the shadows into shelter for fearsome, designing shapes—even as, shivering, round-eyed, they gather close and plot red death, daring the beating of their hearts and the mocking shadows and the garden's uncanny night-plaint, so do these simple folk desperately conspire. The illusion, the shuddering thrill—they are the same.

“Tell us, Elias, who is to shed the Sultan's blood?”

“It shall be by lot,” Rahal whispered; he burst out, thumping the table at each word: “So shall it be determined by whose hand the Sultan is to die.”

“Ah-h!” This was a sigh of relief—delight; it was as though a dark, treacherous path



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

had been suddenly flooded with light. Khayat, forgetting himself in the obscurity of the middle room, chuckled explosively; he had to pinch his leg very, very hard to sober himself—to pinch it until he winced, which was not an easy thing to do, for the leg was very lean.

“But not yet,” Rahal added, knowingly.

“Where and how? Tell us, O Elias!”

There was a confusion of sounds, as of men drawing close to a table. Khayat could hear them push the coffee cups aside; could hear the flimsy little table creak under the weight of the conspirators as they leaned upon it to get their heads the nearer together. He gave his leg a convulsive pinch and cried out with the pain of it.

“What’s that?”

“It is the table groaning.”

“Ah! I thought—I thought—is there no one listening? Are you sure?”

“There is no one.”

Rahal stuttered distractedly: “L-let us—f-f-first revolt.” He paused, listening intently; then continued in a lower, surer voice: “To revolt is the first thing. Let us unite the people of Washin’ton Street and

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

demand of Abdul Hamid the freedom of our land. If he denies us, let us rise and carry fire and the sword even into the innermost palace at Constantinople. Sadahala," he continued enthusiastically, "you draw up the paper for the Party of Liberty. Have all the people sign it. Then——"

"Abo-Samara has more skill with the pen than I, and more learning. Let him——"

"Sadahala, my friend, you honor me too highly," was softly interjected. "I am unlearned, and——"

Khayat had to pinch himself again—this time harder than before; the next morning the leg was blue at that point, as he gleefully observed.

"I," was heard in a proud, hoarse whisper, "will draw up the paper and pass it from hand to hand. I—I—will do it."

"Ah! Who can do it better than Tanous Shishim? Go on, Elias."

"In one month," Rahal said, "the Syrians of Montreal and Philadelphia and all the West will unite with us. There will be an army of three thousand men gathered in N' York—strong men, great in might, greater in courage and patriotism. We will say in

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

the newspapers—the American newspapers—that we have twenty thousand men ready to die for Liberty; and it will be, indeed, as though there were twenty thousand. Who is to deny our words? In two months the news will be carried to Beirout; verily, the rejoicing will be very great. In three months it will be spread to the edge of the desert, even to the furthestmost parts of the land. In four months the people will rise, Christian and Mohammedan, kin in heritage, brothers in high purpose; and they will arm themselves with sword and rifle and raise the banner of the Party of Revolution, leaping to the trumpet-call of Liberty as to the cry of one risen from the dead. It will be, oh men—it will be the great Arabic uprising! Then will a great fleet, a fleet mighty and invincible, sail from these shores to the very gate of Constantinople, and a great army will take ship from N' York, an army of the friends of Liberty, an army——”

“What fleet and what army, O Elias?”

The question was asked in tremulous eagerness.

“The fleet of the United States and the army of a free people,” said Rahal.

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

"Can it be so?"

"Is it, in truth, a thing possible?"

Khalil Khayat sighed. The pathos of the situation was clear to him; it may be that he sighed because the great uprising was a mere mirage.

"Did not the United States set free the slaves of Spain in Cuba?" Rahal said. "Did the great American people hesitate? Will the President forsake us in our distress—forsake *us*, who gave our sons to fight his battles? Let us send the Doctor to the President, even to the White House at Washin'ton, to set our prayer before him. The Doctor—who can withstand his oratory? Is there a more learned man? Is there a man more used to intercourse with the high and noble? Who——"

"But who will provide the Doctor with *fare* to Washin'ton, Elias?"

"We shall need much money," Rahal answered dubiously.

There was a pause in the talk—vigorous, nervous puffing.

"I am a poor man," one sighed.

"And I," sighed the second.

"And I," sighed the third.

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

"And I," sighed the fourth.

"God," said Rahal in humility, "has favored me also with poverty." A suggestive silence followed. "It may be," Rahal pursued, speculatively, "that the friends of Liberty will help us. The Americans are very rich; there is no bottom to their purses, nor any meanness in their hearts. Mm-m-m! Perchance—who knows—how many thousands of *dollars* have they sent to the Armenians? Tanous, is it not known to you? Surely they have sent millions of *dollars*—millions—yes, truly—millions of *dollars*—to the Armenians."

Rahal came to a stop; the sounds of puffing were such as men make when they are eager—dreaming fast.

"If God give me strength," Tanous Shishim said solemnly, "I shall devote my talents to the labor of counting the money—my life to its safekeeping—my——"

"But, Tanous, I——"

"You, Tanous! Why, I——"

"It may be," Rahal put in softly, in clear-cut, hard words, "that five guardians are better than one. Is it not so?"

"It is even so."

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

Khayat, hearing, flushed for his race.

"Let us immediately organize the Party of Revolution," Rahal pursued. "Here—in this very place, let us do it."

"It is a small, mean room to be so honored."

"It shall be remembered forever. When we are dust men will say, 'In this room Liberty was born'!"

"It will be a sacred place."

"It may be that our children's children through many years to come will count this table more precious than its weight in jeweled gold, saying, the one to the other, 'The hand of Elias Rahal rested upon it,' or, 'Did not Abo-Samara the Patriot touch it with his very fingers? Let us, also, touch the holy thing.' They will save it—perchance, even as the Americans save the shoes of George Washin'ton, that great Emperor, counting them above price, as I have been told."

"And the hand of Tanous Shishim—what of it?" Tanous growled jealously.

"Even so," one added, perfunctorily; "and the hand of Tanous Shishim rested upon the table."

"Our names will be remembered forever! God is good! He is loving and wise and



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

just! Who would not lay down his life for Liberty?"

"Even unto death will we persevere!"

"And henceforth Liberty shall be unto us as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, leading us, even as it is written."

"Even unto death!"

"Ah-h-h!"

There was a tense, solemn pause, as of a hushed moment, fraught with irrevocable consequences, when men—to whom, it may be, martyrdom is revealed in beauty—exalted past speech, past every thought, standing before the people with naked hearts, dedicate themselves to the service of the Eternal and Most High. The clatter and snort and warning shriek of a fire engine, and the voices and feet of many children as they scampered madly in its wake past the outer door toward Battery Park, sounded strangely distant and insignificant, like wedding merriment floating from over the way into a room where a woman lies dead—a fluttering vanity.

"Even unto death!" Khalil Khayat sighed responsively.

Knowing the hearts of men, the old man

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

was thrilled, sympathetically, to the marrow by the vow. Enraptured of the beauty of Patriotism, and susceptible to distraction from evil suspicion as a child is easy to turn from frowns to smiles with a bright color, he was momentarily lifted above doubt—swept into high forgetfulness of the simplicity and sham of this conspiracy. He clasped his hands and lifted up his eyes; and for him, then, verily, the darkness was given to reveal the inspiring tender face and benedictive gesture of the Master whom he served. The rapture beneficently lingered, providing him a little dream with which to comfort himself through the evil hours of many days; and then it ebbed, swiftly, inevitably, as the ghastly greed of the conspirators in the next room forced itself into his consciousness again, until their prostitution of the Spirit plunged him in a despair deeper than his ecstasy had been high. He had thought he was long past such complaining; he had schooled himself to sigh and say, God is good! Was his work not higher than the hands of these men could reach to hinder? The forgotten depth of pain raised, as a spirit, his impetuous, sensitive youth, when

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

a day had seemed long enough for a sowing and a reaping, and he had kicked stubbornly against the pricks. He saw himself a lad of wayward ardor—in the old, familiar body—bent upon tipping an established throne with the strength of his own arm; and he wiped his eyes and smiled upon his old self, as upon a child of his own, and fell into a deep, sweet dream, forgetting, for the time, all about Elias Rahal and his company of boasters.

When consciousness of time and place came back to Khayat, Tanous Shishim was speaking; as he had spoken many times, for he had only one speech to make, and men knew it by heart, so often had they heard it:

“..... Is our people forever to suffer meekly? Lo, the land of our birth is as a hell upon earth! Its smoke is injustice; its flame’s ’s ravishment and the shedding of blood; its lord is”—Tanous discreetly let his voice fall—“the Sultan Abdul Hamid. Out of their—their bondage d-do our brothers call to us; morning and evening do they call to God to—to—melt our hearts with—yes—compassion—that’s it.” Tanous was now in a rapture, past the bounds of reasonable utterance; he continued: “Patriots

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

has arisen after long sleeping; they have—have bust—yes, bust the bonds of selfishness and fear; and the people cry, all men of them. ‘The night is over; its soldiers—surely I have forgotten it—yes, its soldiers fly, its banners ’s in the dust, its troops ’s retreating!’ In freedom shall the little children sing songs of us; forever shall our names be set in printed pages; forever shall——”

Khayat had sped from passive attention to high wrath. How, save in anger, could he hear violence done the Language Beautiful? Spirit of Beauty! It was like a foul affront to a man’s well-beloved in his very presence. It was a personal, present offense, capable of immediate effect; and Khayat was quick to speak, as a strong, true man is quick to strike. “Stop! Stop!” he cried in a sobbing passion, throwing the door wide. “You, O Tanous Shishim—you an orator! You dare to public speech! Illiteracy presuming to the highest accomplishment of culture! A pig on a throne! Lo, I speak the words—I, even I, Khalil Khayat. Is it so, O Tanous, that you are a graduate of the American College at Beirout, and know so little of the graces of your own tongue? Burst—not bust, Tanous!

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

And, in the name of God, O Tanous Shishim, are you an old man and still ignorant of the rule that a noun plural is never—never, O Tanous, to be followed by a verb singular? Agh! You have given me a headache,” he cried, putting his hand to his forehead. “I shall not sleep to-night for the discord of your words. Hear me, you orator, and learn!” Khayat struck an heroic attitude that went grotesquely with his old clothes; you would have been moved to laughter, but the splendid passion of the pose and the fire flashing in the old eyes set their nostrils quivering, as he exclaimed, sonorously: “‘The night is over; its banners trail the dust, its hosts are retreating—aye, its *heroes* flee!’” The noise in the common room, where many men were passing the time against the hour for the band to play in Battery Park, subsided; and there was a listening silence for a time. “Say it so, Tanous,” Khayat gasped, and sat down, exhausted. No man spoke one word; they all lingered, blissfully, in the spell of the words’ beauty. “How wonderful is your gift of speech, O Khalil Khayat!” Elias Rahal whispered in deep emotion at last.



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

“It is given of God, and——”

Khayat stopped to hearken. Some one came swiftly through the common room—some important man for whom the people made way and hushed their boisterous voices; to whom they gave respectful greeting: “May the day close in happiness for you! May all the blessings of evening attend you!” It was the Doctor—Salim Effendi, of the *Faculte de Medecine de Constantinople*—the Doctor himself, than whom there was no greater man in Washington Street; he of the threadbare hauteur, and rusty, alien high hat and yellow gloves and militant dignity, who would sit no longer than fifteen minutes by the watch with any man of the Quarter, save only Nageeb Fiani, the artist, and Khalil Khayat. He burst into the little back room, forgetful, for once, of the politeness of knocking; then they knew that some great thing had happened, and their hearts stood still. “Ho!” he gasped. “Yusef Abo-Samara, are you here? God be thanked! As you value the life of your father in Aleppo, oh my friend, whisper no word against the Sultan this night!” The Doctor was trembling; his eyes were bulging;



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

his high hat was toppling shamelessly over his ear, as though through necessity of such haste as men make for their lives. What was the danger? Elias Rahal shivered. "The sedition—it has been spread abroad," the Doctor went on. "It has come to the ears of men in high places, even to the ears of the Consul in N' York. By the sword and the shed blood, it has gone higher!" he burst out. "The Minister—the very Minister from Washin'ton has come."

"Ah!"

"Mercy of God!"

"Is there no help for us!"

"It is very truth," the Doctor proceeded.

"Within one hour he will be in the meeting-room of the Orthodox Church for a reception. Hadji, the Consul's servant, has but this moment left the dispensary, having overwhelmed me with the news. The arrangements are in my hands, by order of the Consul. It is for me to——"

"Doctor," Elias Rahal whimpered, eagerly,

"Am I not your friend? Have I spoken one word of enmity against you? Have I not——"

"Doctor, Doctor," Nageeb Lufty interrupted, whining. "I ——"

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

"Hear me, O Doctor Effendi," Tanous Shishim cried, pushing young Lufty aside and catching the Doctor by the lapel of his coat. "Have I not always said that you were a great doctor? Were you not at the bedside when my first wife died? Have I not paid the bill without complaining, though it was the greatest bill I ever saw—when the sick one died? Have I not sent you hundreds, even thousands, of patients, naming your name as the great——"

"Elias," the Doctor interrupted impatiently, "what——"

"Ah!" Elias cried. "Am I bidden to the reception? Tell me—quick, am I——"

"Yes, yes, Elias, you are bidden."

Elias exclaimed joyfully, and hurried away to grease his hair and put on a red necktie.

"And I," Tanous Shishim said. "I am very rich. Am I not——"

"Yes, Tanous; and you, too, Abo-Samara——"

"Doctor," Nageeb Lufty wailed, "I named you for President of the Society for Peace. I have cried down your enemies. Only yesterday I said to Nageeb Fiani, who will bear me out in this thing, that you were the

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

greatest doctor in the world. Is my love to be forgotten; can it be——”

“No, no, Nageeb. You, too, are bidden to the reception.”

Lufty overtook Tanous at the door, and whispered in his ear, privately: “Elias Rahal is not our friend. He will speak evil of us in the ear of the Minister. Let us keep watch, O Tanous!” Thereupon Tanous Shishim hurried to the home of Elias Rahal, and whispered in his ear, privately: “Elias, danger is round about us. Nageeb Lufty is our enemy. Let us stand close to the Minister, lest he speak evil against us.” And when Tanous had gone, Elias Rahal went through the street, searching for Nageeb Lufty; and when he had found him, he took him aside and whispered in his ear, privately: “Nageeb, it is in the heart of Tanous Shishim to destroy us. He will speak evil of us in the ear of the Minister. Let us keep at his side that we may hear every word that he says; for, surely, if we do not, he will speak evil and destroy us.” Then Elias Rahal and Nageeb Lufty and Tanous Shishim each determined in his heart to speak in the ear of the Sultan’s Minister for himself,

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

that they might gain some advantage, the one over the other.

Abo-Samara went home for a tarboosh, the badge of loyalty, leaving the Doctor alone with Khalil Khayat in the little back room. The Doctor hesitated at the threshold. "Khalil—" he began, uncertainly. He paused. He cut a loose thread from the finger-tip of his glove with his teeth, and spat it out nervously. It would have been a fragment of the nail had the hand been bare. Thrice he essayed to speak; thrice the courage of his kindly intent failed him. He turned resolutely, as if to go; but held his step, looking over his shoulder. "Khalil," he said hoarsely, facing desperately about. "I—I—am your friend. I have no heart to slight you before men. It is an honor—it is a high honor in the sight of men to—to kiss—the hand of the Sultan's Minister." The Doctor paused again; and Khayat, recalling his smiling thought from the recent situation, turned his glance, seriously, to the Doctor's wavering eyes. "You," the Doctor went on, "you, too, are bidden, even as an honored guest, to the Minister's reception; and——" "I?" Khayat asked, in solemn wonder.

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

"As an honored guest, Khalil," the Doctor answered hurriedly. "No man will misconstrue——"

"And have you not known me for seven years?" Khayat said with gentle reproof.

"Yes, O Khalil. Seven years of sweetest intercourse have we——"

"And is my heart's enmity a stranger to you?"

The Doctor looked at the floor, saying nothing; but at last he cried, pleading his own justification: "I have a mother in Beirut. What am I to do but——"

"Ah," Khayat interrupted, holding up his hand. "Am I a judge of men? No man is an offense to me because of his sin. Who am I that I should condemn it? I, too, have sinned."

He went on, wearily, absently: "I have thought—I am not sure—it may be—that it is counted as righteousness to dissemble—sometimes—for a woman's sake. I have sinned deeper than that—for a woman—my sister's sake." He had slowly thrust his right hand out from him over the table, and had averted his face from it; now, it was at the limit of his reach, and he was working the fingers against one another, as though they were offensively wet and sticky. He turned his



## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

face, and looked upon the hand with half-closed, contemptuous eyes, as though it were a loathsome thing; then he averted his face again, sharply, and groaned. "I have shed blood—for my sister's sake," he whispered, vacantly; and repeated: "I have shed blood. I—have—shed—blood." The flaring gas, the dingy wall-paper, Fiani's violin, the Doctor—all faded, as in a mist; and in their stead he saw a stretch of sand, covered by the night, and a man creeping, creeping toward a black clump of trees.

The Doctor caught the guilty right hand in both of his and pressed it hard; and then he went out quickly into the noisy, seething night-life of Washington Street near the soap factory.

. . . . .

"'Ave y'u come back?" said Billy Halloran, a touch of reproach in his weak, thin voice, when Khalil Khayat glided in. "Y'u bin gone a hell of a w'ile," he added, plaintively. "I am come back," Khayat whispered. "I am go out no more to-night." He was conscious of a selfish neglect. "Eet have grow very dark here," he added. He felt



## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

the way to the window, and sat down where the breeze might dry and cool his brow ; his heart stilled its revilings, now that Billy lay quiet, comfortable in the companionship restored.

"It's nice an' cool," said Billy.

Khayat made no response ; but quavered a strange, tearful air, in an absent way.

"Ain't dey ready t' lick de Sultan?" Billy asked, feeling for the cause of the old man's sadness.

"No," Khayat said slowly ; "they have not become ready—yet."

"Ain't dey never goin' t' fight?"

"Some day the people they weel fight."

"Yaller, ain't dey? Dey ought t' hump demsel's."

"When the flesh eet have drop from my bones," Khayat said, struggling obdurately with the language, to convey the beauty of his thought, "then well they have draw the sword. An' een the blow weel the strength of my dead arm be."

"I do' know—I do' know w'at y'u mean," Billy said, listlessly.

There was a long silence.

"We bot' got our troubles," said the boy,

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

with a sigh. "I got me bad leg, an' you can't make dem fight."

"Ah," Khayat said tenderly, "I have no trouble so great as yours." He bowed and smiled, as though making a compliment.

"You got de hardes' luck."

"Ah, no!"

"I bet y'u y'u got de hardes luck. I got a nickel in me clo'es, an——"

Eef I have a heart more heavy, eet ees because I am an old, foolish man, and all the wisdom of children eet ees yours."

"I do' know," Billy said, blankly. "I feel better, anyway."

There was another long silence.

"I guess I'll go to sleep," said Billy. "Good-night, Mister Khayat. Dey'll fight fer y'u—some day—er—I will—w'en I grow up—an' me leg—gits—better."

Billy was asleep; so Khalil Khayat went to his own room across the hall, in the happy consciousness that the boy was loosed from the discomfort of the body for the time. He groped his way to his old chair with a light heart. He reached lovingly for the big black book wherein the thoughts of Abo Elola Elmoarri are set down, to hold it in his hand

## THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

for the comfort and companionship in the touch of it; and he looked out from the darkness of his room into the pale night-light—into the depths of the wide, jeweled sky, out of which pure serenity descends upon the sons of men as a dew; nor did the murmurings of the great city, nor the stench of its wickedness, nor the echoes of the night's faithlessness oppress him, for they were offenses afar off. This he thought concerning the writing in that day's *Kawkab Elhorriah*, molding the plastic words in forms of beauty, even as Abo Elola Elmoarri did in his time: "A field of wheat is from the seed of a sheaf. What is one wasted seed? My arm is strong for another sowing. Early and late will I sow, that the harvest may be bountiful. And it is more honorable to sow than to reap; for he who reaps, reaps in certainty that which another has sown in hope, and he who sows, sows unselfishly, not knowing that he will reap. When, in the fulness of time, the blow is struck, the strength of my arm will be in it, though the flesh be fallen in fine dust from the bones and my name remembered no more." He clutched the big black book tighter—pressed it, even, against his heart;

## THE SOUL OF THE STREET

perchance, it was to establish himself in his philosophy. At last, vehemently, he said to himself: "And concerning blessedness this I know—know for truth, though it be all I have wrested from the eternal in a long life—that it is more blessed to lighten the life of a child than—than—any—other—thing."

He leaned back in his chair—and nodded—and smiled—and nodded, and fell gently asleep, like a child; for he was an old man, and used to the world's hard knocks.













